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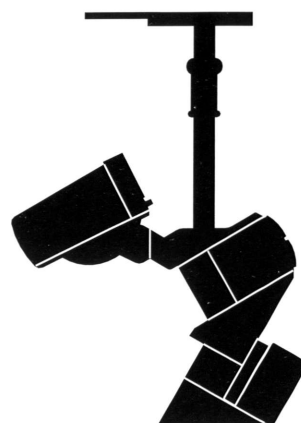




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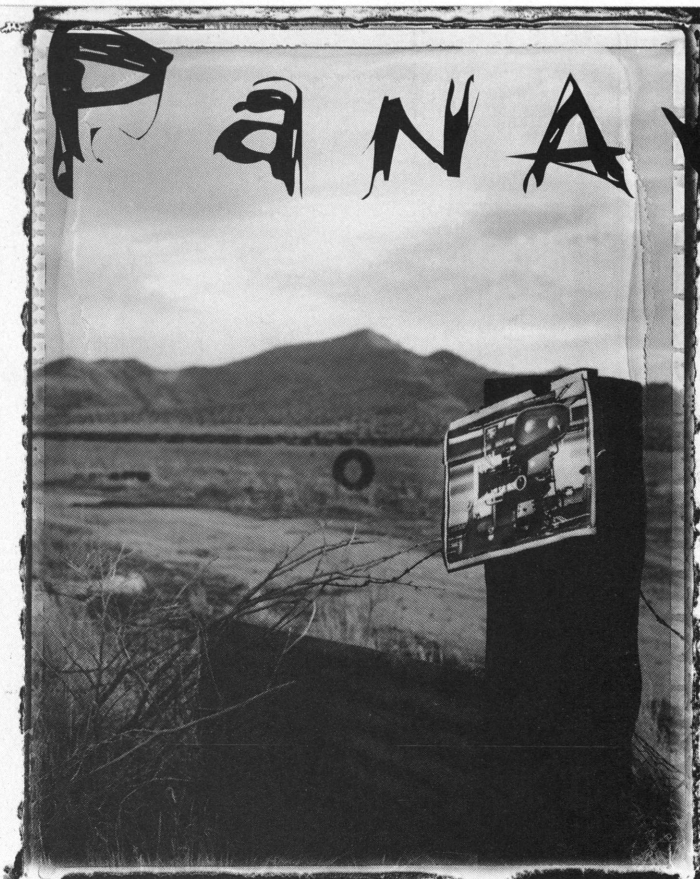
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The International Journal of Film & Digital Production Techniques

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Mr. Data (Brent Spiner)
takes aim with his phaser
in *Star Trek: Insurrection*,
directed by Jonathan
Frakes and photographed
by Matthew Leonetti,
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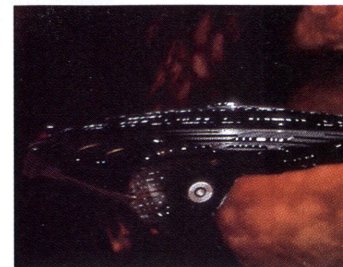
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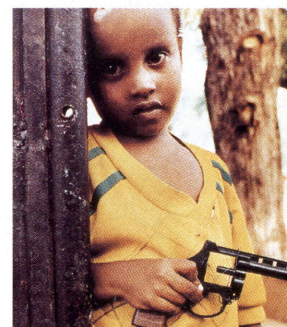
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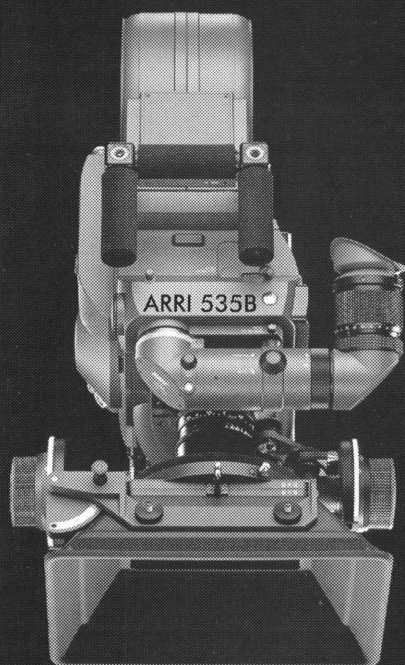
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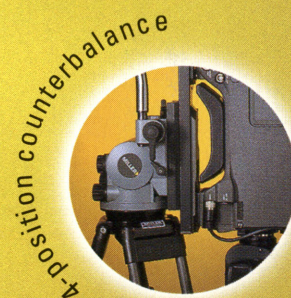
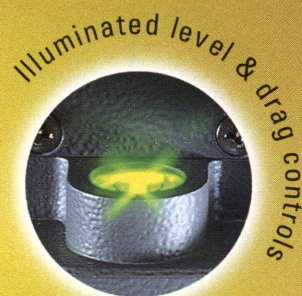
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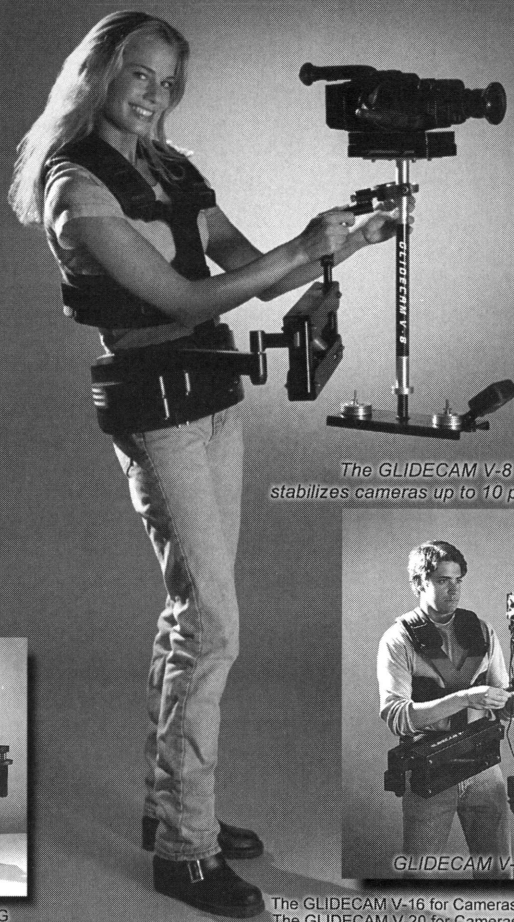
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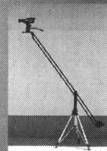
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Two more T2 lenses will be available soon: a 40mm and a 14mm



“The script of *I’ll Be Home For Christmas* called for most of Act 3 to be staged with thousands of Christmas-tree lights against the black night sky,” says DP Hiro Narita. “At T3, I couldn’t risk flare or ghosts; I used the new Cooke primes”

“A few years ago, we had a night exterior shot of a man sitting by an open fire, both of them in frame,” says Hiro Narita. “At the dailies, we saw a ghost of the fire floating above the man’s head. It was a wide shot, so the operator hadn’t noticed any double kick in the finder.”

“I’ve worked with most of the spherical fixed lenses out there, over the years—high-speed and standard, all makes. Whenever we had a hot shot like that open fire, I remember them all being subject to some flare or ghosting, wide open and one or two stops down—some more than others.”

“After reading the *Home For Christmas* script, I set up several tests. We’d need to balance the foreground light levels with the tree lights in the background. And the director wanted a romantic look for those scenes. That meant diffusion, but it didn’t mean flare. And one of the interiors would have a fire flickering in the fireplace.”

“On a big, darkened stage, we hung up hundreds of those tree lights. Using 5279, I shot right into



Director of Photography
Hiro Narita ASC

the lights at T4, T2.8 and wide open, with a set of the new Cookes I’d heard about. I made one test series clean and other tests with Promist (various densities) at those three apertures.”

“I didn’t expect to shoot those scenes in the picture wide open, but I wanted to see what was possible. We were after a romantic softness overall, not just in the highlights. Ideally, we needed

lenses that didn’t flare at all from the tree lights, so that we could then soften *everything* with the Promist. Wide open was obviously the toughest test, with or without diffusion.”

“The test footage showed that we’d get the balance we needed at T3 and that the one-eighth Promist was the one to use. Wide open and without diffusion, there was no noticeable veiling glare, even shooting *directly* into the test lights. By T4, there was none.”

“Later, shooting the actual scenes at T3 with diffusion, we were able to soften the foreground, with just a slight romantic glow from each individual Christmas light. There were literally thousands of them, up against the black night sky; and the sky stayed black.”

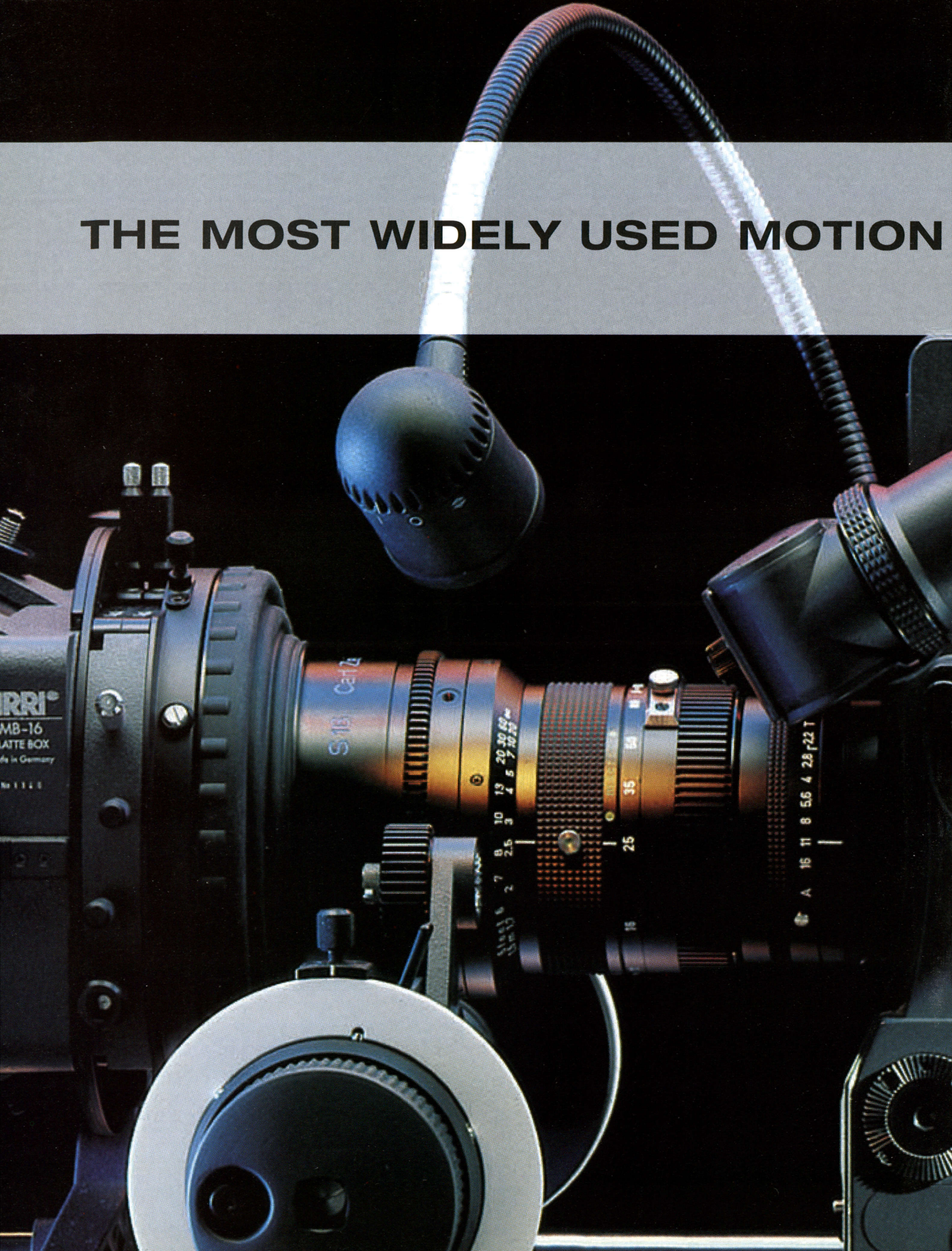
“Night exteriors at wide stops—I’ve always had to think about the danger of flare, in scenes like that. And on this job, we *had* to use diffusion and the lights *had* to be in frame. But there was no flare; and there was no double kick from the fire in the fireplace.”

Hiro Narita ASC has been a Director Of Photography since 1971. The National Society of Film Critics gave his feature NEVER CRY WOLF their Best Cinematography Award. His FAREWELL TO MANZANAR won a Best Cinematography Emmy Nomination. And his short film VISAS & VIRTUES won an Academy Award in 1997.

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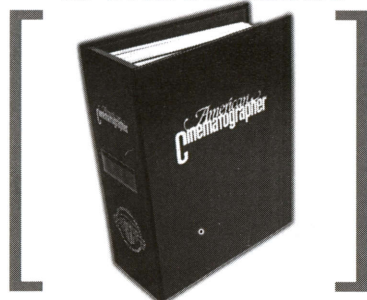
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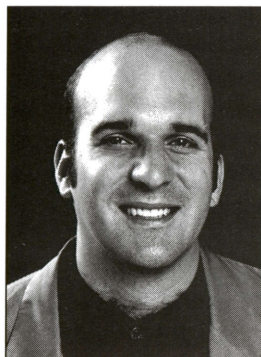
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Editor's Note



In this age of megahype and megabudgets, the admirable efforts of documentary filmmakers are often overlooked. That's truly a shame, because the work of these diligent artists frequently offers the kinds of insights and emotional truths that only the best feature films can achieve. Movie lovers everywhere appreciate the creativity and inventiveness of a well-crafted piece of fiction, but nothing resonates quite like real life.

This issue of *AC* illustrates the point by exploring the full range of the documentary aesthetic.

Our coverage kicks off in Production Slate (page 16)

with an overview of the Third International Documentary Congress, held recently in Los Angeles. Attendees debated a variety of intriguing topics, including the philosophy of cinema vérité and the challenges presented by dwindling budgets. Meanwhile, this month's feature articles present several riveting pictures that deserve an audience. In *War Zone* (page 60), Manhattan-based filmmaker Maggie Hadleigh-West confronts abusive male pedestrians in an attempt to understand their attitudes toward women. Across the globe, writer/director/producer Michael Henry Wilson travels through Tibet to capture one of our most accomplished auteurs in action (*In Search of Kundun With Martin Scorsese*, page 68). We've gone even further afield, to the world's most treacherous locations and geopolitical hot spots, to report on the trials and tribulations of documentarians who can't seem to resist the lure of hazardous assignments ("The Art of Filming Dangerously," page 84). Finally, lest we forget that the real world can also be amusing, *Trekkies* (page 76) visits some of science fiction's most devoted followers, who occasionally take their love of *Star Trek* just a *bit* too far.

Speaking of *Star Trek*, this edition of the magazine will no doubt excite those same stalwart fans with complete coverage of *Insurrection*, the ninth installment of the ever-popular Paramount franchise. Cinematographer Matthew Leonetti, ASC reveals the details of his photographic approach to this new outer-space adventure ("Trouble in Paradise," page 30), while the film's effects experts demystify their digital wizardry ("Effecting an Insurrection," page 40).

If Earthbound stories are more to your liking, *A Civil Action* (p. 48) brings this issue of *AC* full circle. After scoring a cinematic triumph with their first collaboration, *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, director Steven Zaillian and cinematographer Conrad Hall, ASC have reteamed to create a compelling courtroom drama based on a real-life case in Woburn, Massachusetts, where lawyers attempted to prove that two corporate monoliths had tainted the town's water supply, causing the leukemia-related deaths of five children and one adult. In this motion picture, art and actual events merge to impressive effect, shedding some light on a thorny ethical dilemma.

Sincerely,

Stephen Pizzello

Executive Editor

e-mail: stephen_pizzello@cinematographer.com

ON FILM

KEN KELSCH, ASC

"Cinematography is such a diverse platform because you have to draw on so many different things. The job stays fresh as long as you maintain a degree of wonderment. I love this work because no book teaches you how to do it. You learn to light by moving a lamp and seeing what it does. I shot *The Addiction*, my favorite film in just 18 days. The Philadelphia Enquirer said I shot it in black and black with a little bit of white. I consider myself a minimalist, and a naturalist. I've broken every rule, but always for a reason. You learn to be decisive and (determine) which fights are worthwhile. When I make a commitment, it's 110 percent."

Ken Kelsch, ASC, has worked as a grip and a gaffer. He has shot some 50 music videos, countless commercials and such narrative films as *Rear Window*, *Bad Lieutenant*, *Dangerous Game*, *The Addiction*, *Montana*, *Susan's Plan*, *It Had to Be You*, *Big Night*, and *The Imposters*.

All of these films were shot on Kodak motion picture film.



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The Post Process

Crest National's Ultrascan Solution

by Debra Kaufman

Postproduction of VistaVision, 65mm and other, less common film formats has always posed extra challenges. In order to view dailies, filmmakers have had to print the negative down to 35mm, a costly and time-consuming step. Crest National VP of engineering Jon Truckenmiller thought there must be a better way.

The result is Ultrascan, which Crest boasts is the world's only 65/70mm flying spot telecine. In addition to digital 525/625 transfers, Ultrascan's capabilities include high-resolution film-to-tape transfers from 5-, 8-, 10- and 15-perf 65/70mm film; 2-, 3-, 4- and 8-perf (VistaVision) 35mm; and 16mm as well. Based on the Cintel Mark III Turbo, the Ultrascan suite offers Ultrascan color correction, Digital Audio & Video's HD AccuColor, POGLE color-correction, customized digital-video noise reduction, Dolby audio noise reduction (Type SR and A), surround matrix encoding, X-Y zoom, freeze-framing, skip-framing and Metaspeed 2-96 fps transfers. In addition, the Evertz Keylog Express dailies from 65/35/16mm film transfer directly to the Avid Media Recorder.

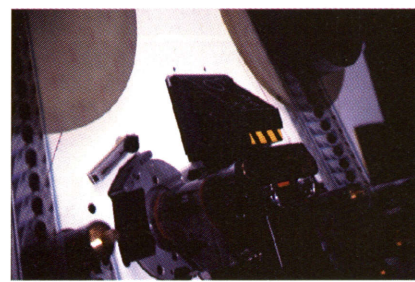
In other words, Ultrascan doesn't compromise any of the functionality found in a typical telecine room. The only trade-off, says Truckenmiller, is one normally associated with large-format film: increased dirt, a problem that is handled with "a lot of ionized air and fastidious cleanliness." Truckenmiller reports that the biggest glitch in a large-format film transfer session happens when filmmakers, in breaking rolls down for lightweight magazines, wind the film in the wrong direction. Truckenmiller advises clients to make sure camera rolls are properly wound before shooting

begins, and reminds them not to splice dailies with opaque tape, which covers up the bar code.

Both visual effects and large-format films can benefit from Ultrascan transfers by avoiding the print-down process. For Digital Domain's visual-effects dailies for *Armageddon*, Crest National transferred the VistaVision negative to Betacam SP videotape, which was returned to the visual-effects facility within 24 hours, along with an Avid-compatible keylog and files referencing the source's precise keycode numbers for offline editing. Ultrascan also transferred VistaVision negatives for visual-effects sequences in *Titanic*, *Men in Black*, *Snake Eyes*, *Contact*, *Starship Troopers* and *Dante's Peak*.

In the large-format film arena, Ultrascan was most recently used by Santa Monica-based L-Squared Entertainment for a same-day transfer of the right-eye camera original 65mm 15-perf negative of *Siegfried & Roy* to Betacam SP, with Flex File for Avid. Other large-

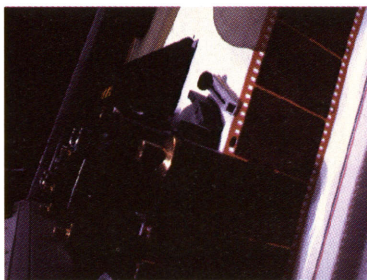
Ultrascan was no overnight success. Truckenmiller first drafted optics for a telecine that could transfer large-format film in the early 1980s, when MGM approached him about transferring the 70mm director's cut of *Heaven's Gate* for home video. At the time, Truckenmiller determined that he could create



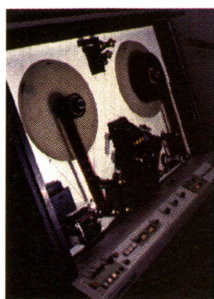
such a telecine for about \$450,000, but not within the tight time frame the studio required.

Still, the experience planted a seed in his mind. Though he realized that more than 100 classic films had been shot in the 5-perf format — and thus were perfect candidates for direct transfers for the burgeoning home-video market — he knew that building a telecine to serve such a limited marketplace wasn't enough incentive. By the late 1980s, however, the 15-perf format also began gaining popularity in museums and special venues. "In conversations with camera people and producers, I came to the realization that these guys were shooting grandiose images, making beautiful movies and having a very hard time doing the postproduction that their 16mm and 35mm brethren were doing routinely," says Truckenmiller.

As mastermind of the project to create a large-format film telecine, Truckenmiller worked with numerous designers and engineers worldwide to create the parts — everything from optics to



format films that bypassed print-downs by transferring on the Ultrascan telecine include *The Edge*, *Baraka*, *Antarctica*, *Yosemite* and *Cronos*, as well as the Iwerks Entertainment offerings *Aliens: Ride at the Speed of Fright*, *Secrets of the Lost Temple*, *Racing With Mario*, *Haunts of the Olde Country*, *Volcano Mine Road*, *Moon Raid Alpha* and *Terminator 2 3D*.





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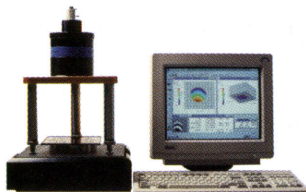
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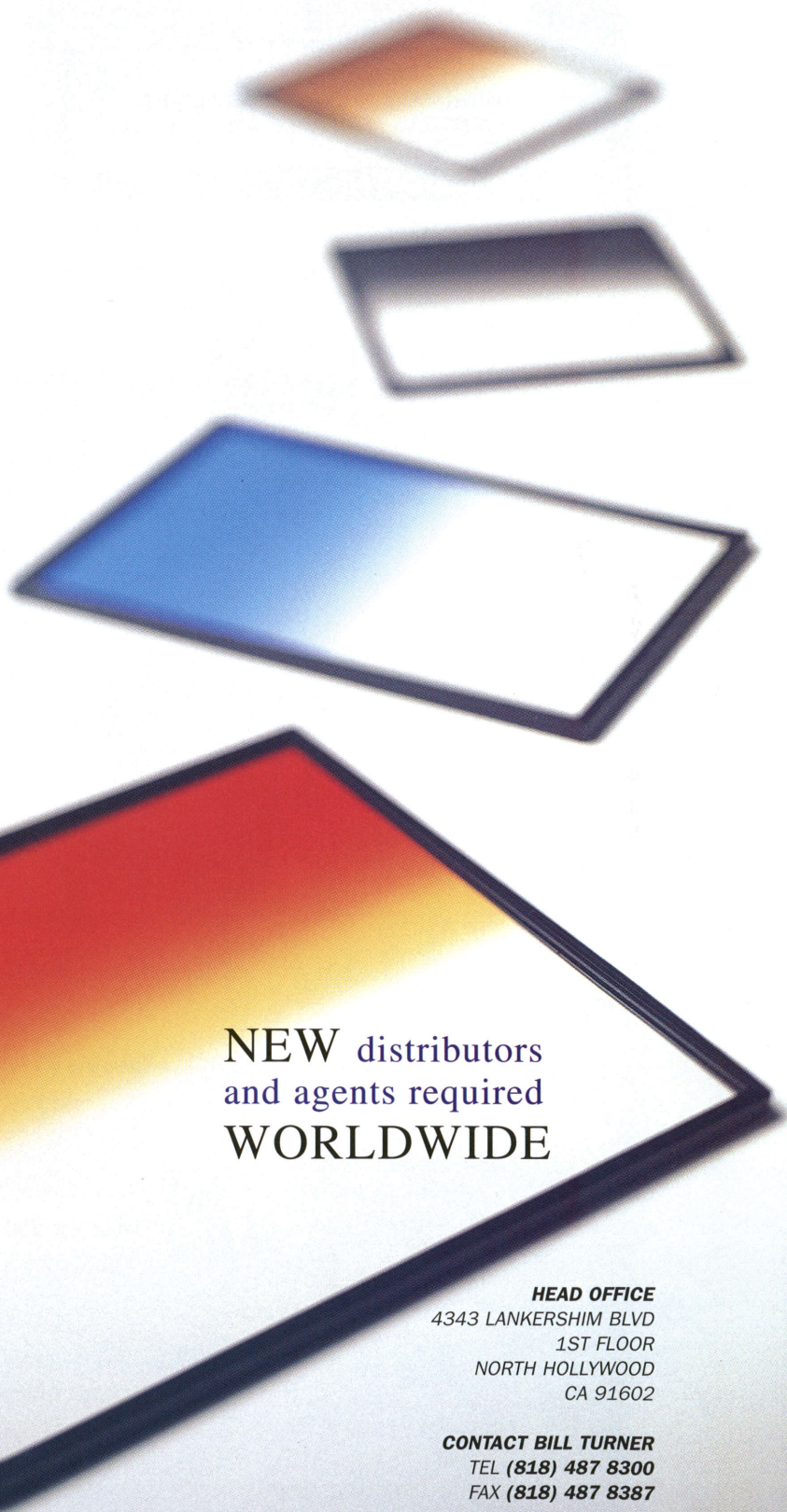
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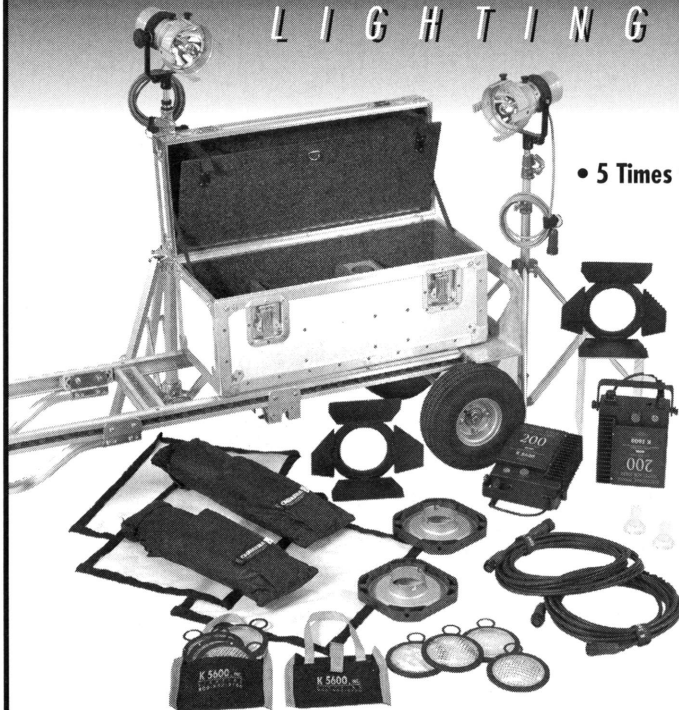
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reel hold-downs that support the film and the rollers that the film travels across. An immediate challenge to the nascent system was the fact that Keycode for 65mm film followed the conventions of 35mm film: 16 frames to the long foot, with the numbers incrementing every 80 perforations. "We realized that [those specifications] weren't going to work for the 15-perf user," recounts Truckenmiller. "If we were going to build a workable system, we had to change the specification of the perforation count in a foot."

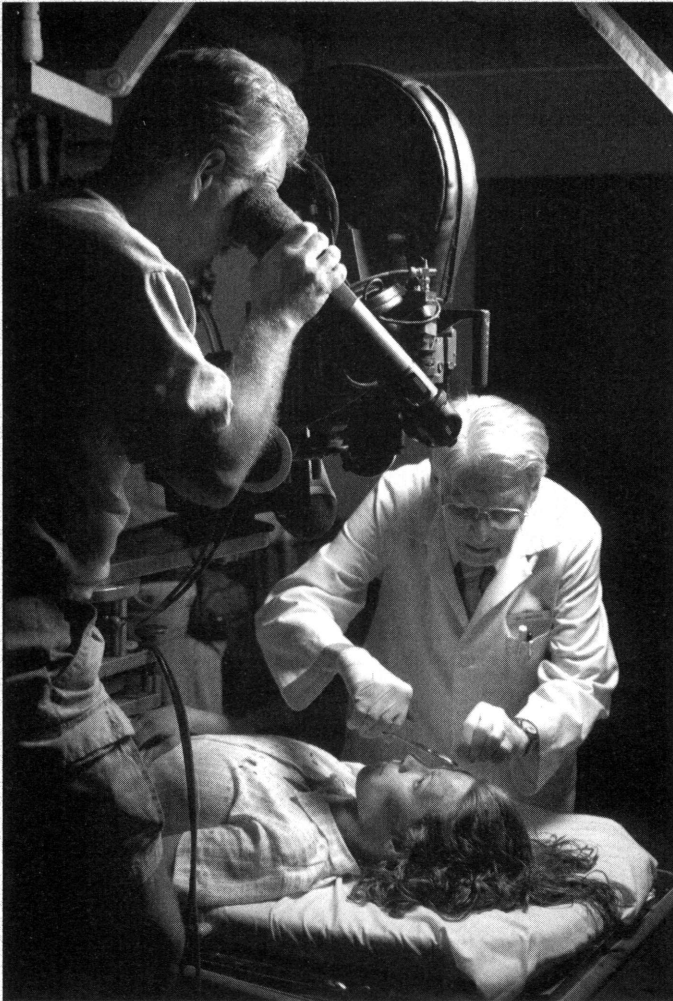
Together with a group of interested industry leaders, Truckenmiller approached Eastman Kodak, which responded with a new numbering system for 65mm edge code. The Eastman Keycode 65 system, which was introduced in 1992, now restarts after 120 perforations. Evertz Microsystems played a role by developing a Keycode reader for automatic transfer of 65mm dailies to video with frame-accurate Keycode. With these pieces in place, Crest National introduced its Express 65 system, offering 65mm video dailies with edge-code service for video transfer, video editing and 65mm film conforming.

The latest evolution of the system, introduced in 1997, is Ultrascan 70 HR, which has the ability to transfer the 15-perf negative in real-time, with a full-bandwidth, correctly rotated picture. "We invented an HD scanning system that allows us to capture the image at full bandwidth and turn each pixel 90 degrees," explains Truckenmiller. "With a traditional telecine, the picture is usually soft and out of focus. This offers the 15-perf market a truly professional product."

The system that Truckenmiller once estimated at \$450,000 has now been invested with \$1.5 million, on top of the basic telecine. And Ultrascan hasn't stopped evolving because, as Truckenmiller notes, "Almost every day someone will invent some new format to meet the needs of a new special-venue theater." On *Titanic*, for example, James Cameron used 2-perf 35mm for his underwater footage, and Truckenmiller reports that he's gotten a request from one filmmaker to rotate 12-perf 35mm. "Name a perf, we can transfer it," he concludes. ■

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Lili Taylor being photographed with BL Evolution swing-over viewfinder system (**Dave McGill, Operator**).



Director, Toni Kalem and **Director of Photography, Michael Barrow**.

Birns & Sawyer provided the camera equipment for the filming of the feature *A Slipping-Down Life* starring **Lili Taylor** on location in Austin, TX with **Director, Toni Kalem** and **Director of Photography, Michael Barrow**.



Michael Barrow, Director of Photography
(pictured above with Aaton 35-III):

"I fell in love with using the combination of a **BL Evolution** and an **Aaton 35-III** on a show I did last year with **Birns & Sawyer**. When I was hired to do *A Slipping-Down Life*, I asked my producer to get me the same package. I can't say enough good things about the Aaton for handheld, jib-arm, and Steadicam work - - what a dream. My operator, Dave McGill, loved the bright, swing-over viewfinder of the BL Evolution. The crew at **Birns & Sawyer** gave us exceptional support, first with providing great camera gear, and second by rushing additional equipment on short notice to our location in Austin, TX. We got terrific images with their cameras and lenses, and according to my producer **Rich Raddon**, at a good price. Thanks, guys!"

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Production Slate

compiled by **Andrew O. Thompson**

IDC/3: The Search for Truth by Jay Holben

In October of 1998, the International Documentary Association convened in Los Angeles for the Third International Documentary Congress, an examination of "Documentary at the Millennium." IDC/3 was host to moviemakers, programmers, distributors, scholars, students and docuphiles, all of whom gathered at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences headquarters for the three-day event. Some 24 panel discussions were held, all dealing with a range of considerations — from the practical aspects of the BBC's acquisition policy to the economic viability of licensing unused visual effects elements as stock footage. The Congress also dedicated a considerable portion of its time to the idea of "truth in documentaries." An ongoing query dealt with how

far a filmmaker should go to achieve a "balance" in the thematic viewpoints within their work. Is it inevitable, and even mandatory, that filmmakers apply editorial choices to whatever material is ultimately presented? Some participants pointed out that the filmmaking process itself makes it unavoidable that the exclusion, or inclusion, of certain elements will bias a documentary's ultimate viewpoint.

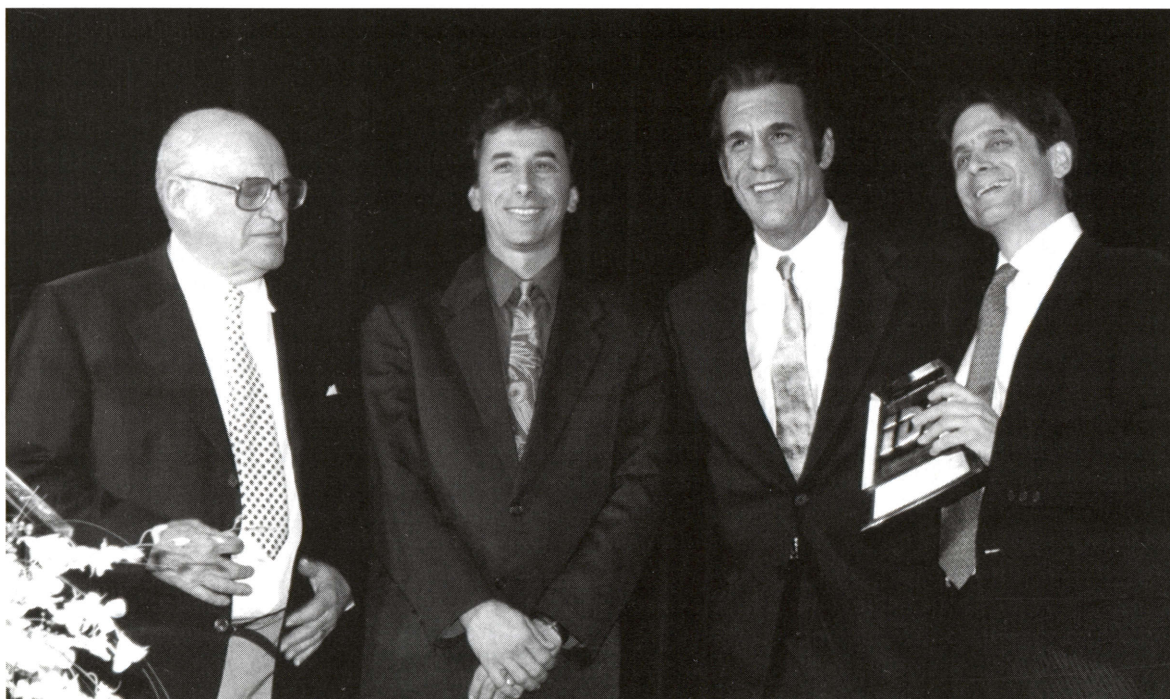
Spotlight on Rock

The opening night's event, entitled "Docs Rock," focused on some of history's most influential rock 'n' roll performance documentaries. "If we're going to learn anything from these films, it would be that the directors brought forth something that we don't normally see in movies — personal insight," noted the evening's moderator, Elvis Mitchell of National Public Radio. "They

found a way to combine that insight with something special in order to create an exciting new medium possessing an up-to-the-minute urgency that hadn't been seen before in movies or documentaries — something that not only changed the way that movies were made, but changed the culture as well."

This presentation was sectioned into four specific subsets of the musical genre, with each followed by a loose panel discussion involving the respective filmmakers. "Documenting the Famous" presented clips from *Don't Look Back* (Bob Dylan; directed by D.A. Pennebaker), *Let It Be* (The Beatles; Michael Lindsay Hogg) and *Gimme Shelter* (The Rolling Stones; the Maysles Brothers & Charlotte Zwerin). Meanwhile, "Performance as Art" included snippets from *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* (The Sex Pistols; Julian Temple), *Divine Madness* (Bette Midler; Michael

Walter Scheuer,
Jerry Kupler
and director
Matthew
Diamond
accept kudos
for *Dancemaker*,
the winning film
in the IDA's
feature category.
The award was
presented by
actor Robert Davi
(third from left).



Photos by Tory Kooyman, courtesy of CCS.

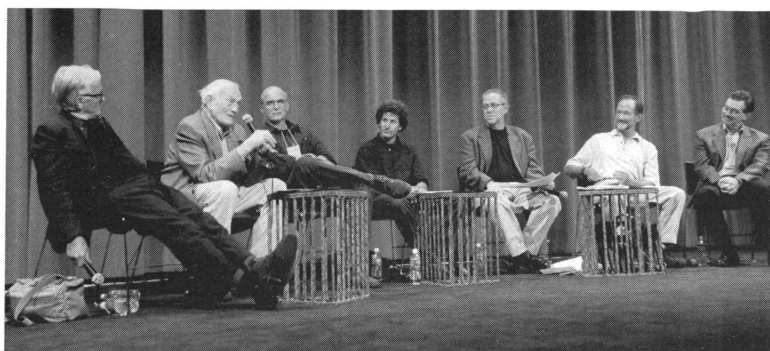
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Right: Participants in the panel "Optimizing Your Image: Visual Technology Now and Later" including (from left to right) Albert Maysles, Richard Leacock, Jon Else, Buddy Squires, Steven Poster, ASC, Greg MacGillivray, and Marker Karahadian. Below: Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker, Robert Drew and Albert Maysles discuss the films *Primary*, *Crisis: Behind the Presidential Commitment* and *Faces of November* with moderator Tim Lyons, editor of *International Documentary* magazine.



Ritchie) and *Rattle and Hum* (U2; Phil Joanou).

Director Michael Lindsay-Hogg recalled that *Let It Be* began its life as television special, with the eventual theatrical release emerging from footage shot for a 20-minute documentary that was initially intended to run in support of the TV program. "In the end, there never was a TV special," commented Lindsay-Hogg. "We'd turn up in the morning with two cameras, and we'd roll. We never knew what we were getting — except that I began to be aware that something more than the making of music was happening. In the first third of *Let it Be*, John [Lennon] and Paul [McCartney] start to fight with each other. About half an hour before [the conflict], I knew that something was going to happen. In those days, the cameras were very intrusive, so we pulled back when we felt [an alterca-

tion] coming on. One of the shots [used in the sequence] is from a really long lens, because we went all the way back on the stage — about 100' — so John and Paul wouldn't know that the camera was there. The other shot came from a camera put up on a gantry."

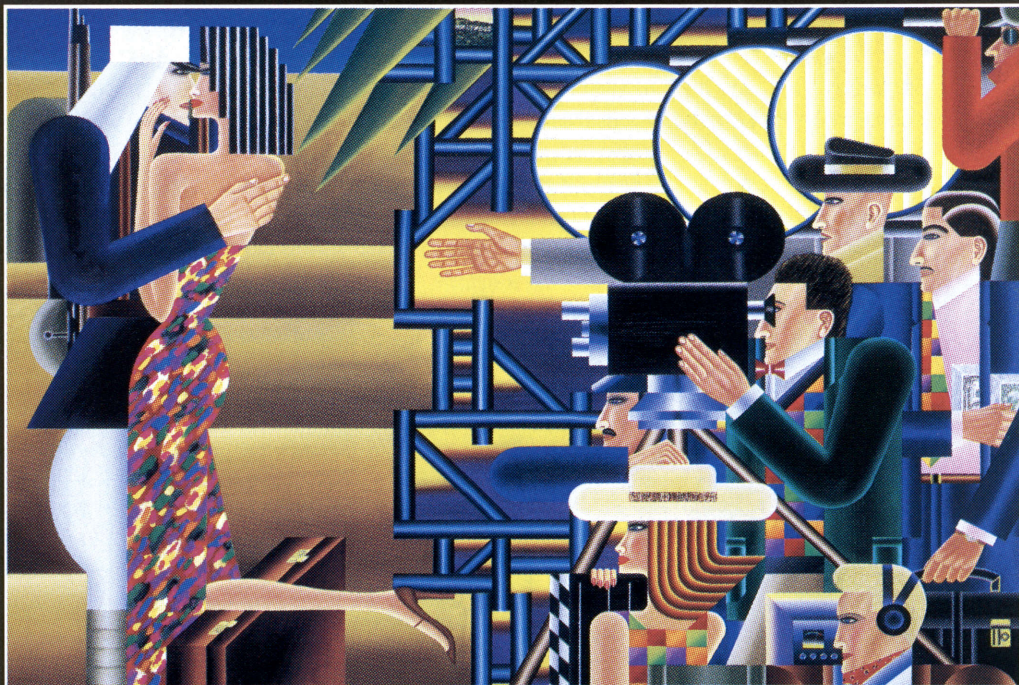
While discussing the filming of *Gimme Shelter*, Albert Maysles noted that the members of the Rolling Stones could sense the impending chaos and violence that accompanied their infamous 1969 concert at the Altamont Speedway. According to the esteemed documentarian, guitarist Keith Richards "was onto it immediately, even before the concert took place. It was maybe three o'clock in the morning when we arrived at the concert area, and we came to a fence as somebody began to tear it down. Unfortunately, it was so dark I couldn't film it, but I remember Richards

turning to us and saying, 'First act of violence...' It was like that smell where you anticipate something that you shouldn't really know anything about."

Phil Joanou recalled the experience of covering the Irish quartet U2 midway through their U.S. tour, revealing that frontman/singer Bono suddenly decided to alter the band's set list after several weeks of gigs. For a concert to be filmed at Sun Devil Stadium in Arizona, cinematographer Jordan Cronenweth, ASC had devised a shooting setup utilizing from eight to a dozen 35mm cameras, which featured an elaborate lighting apparatus requiring seven days of prelighting. Bono's sudden change of mood, however, made all of the preparation moot. "We had been on the tour for about three months doing the black-and-white interview segments of the film [with cinematographer Robert Brinkmann], so we knew the basic set order by the time we shot that concert," Joanou said. "Generally speaking, I could anticipate where the band would be at any given moment, so I put cameras in specific positions on dollies, a Louma crane and two Steadicams. Jordan had flown in 11 Hollywood operators for the shoot. Of course, they didn't know the show at all — all they had was a list of song numbers and cues. The first night in Arizona, Bono came out and [seemingly]



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Right: IDA Executive Director Betsy McLane with Robert Kenner, Werner Herzog, Matthew Diamond, Jerry Kupler, Kodak's Janet Anderson, Aliona van der Horst, HBO senior vice president Sheila Nevins, NYU's George Stoney, Barbara Sonneborn, Jay Rosenblatt, Laurence Rees, IDA president David Haugland and Kodak's Brian Spruill. Lower right: Nevins accepts the IDA's Career Achievement Award.



decided, 'To hell with the film,' and completely improvised the show. I had light cues in the wrong place, and the cameras were never where they should have been — it was a disaster. D.A. Pennebaker said he'd rather train musicians to operate cameras than to teach cameramen music, and I completely agree. We blew that entire night and got practically nothing."

The two remaining subsets in the "Docs Rock" lineup were "Framing Festivals," which presented pieces from *Monterey Pop* (D.A. Pennebaker), *Woodstock* (producer Dale Bell) and *Wattstax* (Mel Stuart), and "Covering the Scene (from Guitar to Grunge)," a look at selections from *The Decline of Western Civilization I* (Penelope Spheeris) and *Hype!* (Doug Pray).

Director Michael Ritchie eloquently summed up the evening with a comment on his film *Divine Madness*: "I was just happy to be able to capture that moment in time. What we're really celebrating here is not just the filmmaking, but the fact that all of us — as filmmakers — were lucky to be with these artists at these very special moments, and to be able to share that experience with audiences."

Cinematographers Have Their Say

On the following day, "Optimizing Your Image," a lively panel session on cinematography, was moderated by Steven Poster, ASC (whose extensive credits include the recent docudrama *A Midwife's Tale*; see AC Jan 1998). During the discussion, director of photography Buddy Squires (*The Civil War* and *Frank*

Lloyd Wright) observed, "There has been a lot of talk about truth here, but I think it is important in that what we all try to do is get at some emotional truth. Whatever technology we choose has to serve that."

Albert Maysles observed, "Much more important than the kind of a camera you use — whether it be film or tape — is what you are actually filming."

Large-format filmmaker Greg MacGillivray (*To Fly* and *Everest*) stated, "It really all comes down to story. Whether you get it in Imax, 35mm, 16mm or Sony Digital, it's the story, and the ideas that are presented, that are key."

Continuing on this subject, Poster submitted, "I'd like to think that video is dead. We are now into the digital age, and I'd rather not call it 'video.' There can't be the distinction that film or digital is better. I think that they are side-by-side mediums and that they have their own uses. There is a perceptual difference between the two, but there are certain things that are best served by recording on film and some things are best served by recording digitally."

Stanford University professor John Else (*Cadillac Desert* and *The Day After Trinity*) added to this idea, stating, "In a lot of ways, the perceptual difference doesn't matter. The younger generation coming up behind us feels perfectly comfortable seeing movies that mix all of these things. You turn on MTV and you have DV mixed with 16mm mixed with 35mm. Shots are degraded and upgraded; it's this wonderful visual anarchy that's incredibly liberating."

Also joining this discussion were Video 8 president Marker Karahadian and celebrated veteran documentarian

Richard Leacock. During the course of the panel, a fervent discussion emerged questioning the technique of lighting an interview in a documentary at the risk of corrupting the work's truth. "If you have to interview, then I think the best light is probably the light that exists at that moment, because that person chose to be in that light at that time," elucidated Maysles. "[It's the difference between] walking into a room and just being yourself, and walking into a room that someone is lighting — moving this and changing that. Finally, you're ready to shoot and you've become a different person — you're lit. I'm very primitive about this, and perhaps I have much to learn, but getting involved with lighting is a distraction from something more important."

Squires countered, "However, if one is dealing with history, and you're talking to a historian about the Civil War, you don't necessarily care about what his house looks like; you care about the knowledge that's inside his head, and you want your lighting to evoke the emotion of what he's talking about. It's not about where [your subjects] are. That may, in fact, require lighting them in a form of portraiture that allows their words to come through in the most potent way. I don't disagree [that one should avoid fabricating a moment] if we're talking about a vérité situation, but if we're talking about a situation where you're creating a moment in time, I often alter the spaces that I go into."

Else offered, "What has to be remembered is the difference between



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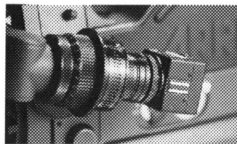
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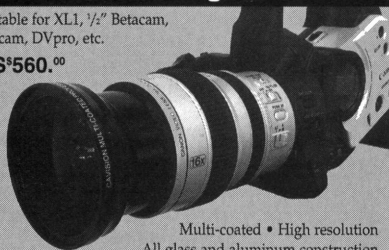
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really preserving and heightening a moment that is in the present, and deliberately destroying that reality to let the audience go back fifty or a hundred years — to suspend the reality of being in 1998 and let someone hear a story from 1964."

Solutions to Shrinking Budgets?

As expected, the Congress was peppered with discussions centered on

the growing concern of increasing production costs and the proportionately shrinking dollar value of finished products, which has resulted in decreased budgets. In counter-revolution to this paradox, many documentarians are turning more toward the world of digital production. This group includes cinema vérité pioneers like Leacock and Maysles, who find themselves enticed by the flexibility and relative low cost of

Other IDA Panels:

Getting Started in a Documentary Career in the U.S. with Thelma Vickroy, Mitchell W. Block, Arthur Dong, Jackie Glover, Jesse Lerner, Ruby Lerner, Debby Reed Levin, David Linstrom, Brenda Reisweg, Mary Schaffer, Michael Smith, and David Weisman.

Focus on BBC Documentaries with Laurence Rees

Focus on Historical/Biographical Documentaries with David L. Wolper, David Grubin, Robert Guenette, Susan Lacy, Laurence Rees and Mel Stuart

Documentary Film Festivals Outside the U.S. with Geoffrey Gilmore, Alex Cooke, Ally Derks, Amir Labaki and Debbie Nightingale

Focus on Reality Bites/True TV with Timothy J. Lyons, Steve Cheskin, John Rieber and Steven Rosenbaum.

EU and NAFTA - Documentary Co-Production Allies with Chris Haws, Jan Rofekamp and Brian Donegan

Focus on Natural History Journeys with Thom Beers, Barry Clark, Howard Hall, Maureen Lemire and Mark Lewis

New Media: Documentaries Beyond Television & Film with Craig Southard, Cindy Johnason, Dr. Robert Semper, David Weiner and Curtis Wong

Focus on Eastern Europe with John Marshall and Chris Haws

Making Money Saving Movies with Robert Rosen, Les Blank, Michael Donaldson, Robert Drew, David Seevers and Barry Dagestino

Focus on Pacific Rim with Jeanette Paulson-Hereniko, Nick Deocampo, Gerry Flahive, Dai Sil Kim-Gibson and David Bradbury

Focus on Africa with Judy Richardson and Ane-Laure Folly

Focus on China with Len McClure, Clarissa Dong, Merle Linda Wolin, Wang Xiao Ping and Jennifer Stephens

Focus on Latin/South America with Patricia Boero, Ricardo Dias, Paul Espinosa, Carmen Guarini, Juan "Paco" Urrusti, Marisa Sistach

Ask the Executive Experts About the Future with Meryl Marshall, Nancy Abraham, Geoffrey Darby, Andrew Gellis, Chris Haws and Sandy McGovern

Freedom of Expression/Responsibility of the Maker with Chris Haws, David Bradbury, Nick Deocampo, S. Krishnaswamy, Juan Francisco Urrusti and Ane-Laure Folly

Focus on On-Line Action with Mary C. Schaffer, James Buch and Tom Neff

Focus on Israel with Michèle Ohayon, Udy Epstein, Micha X. Peled and Ilan Ziv.

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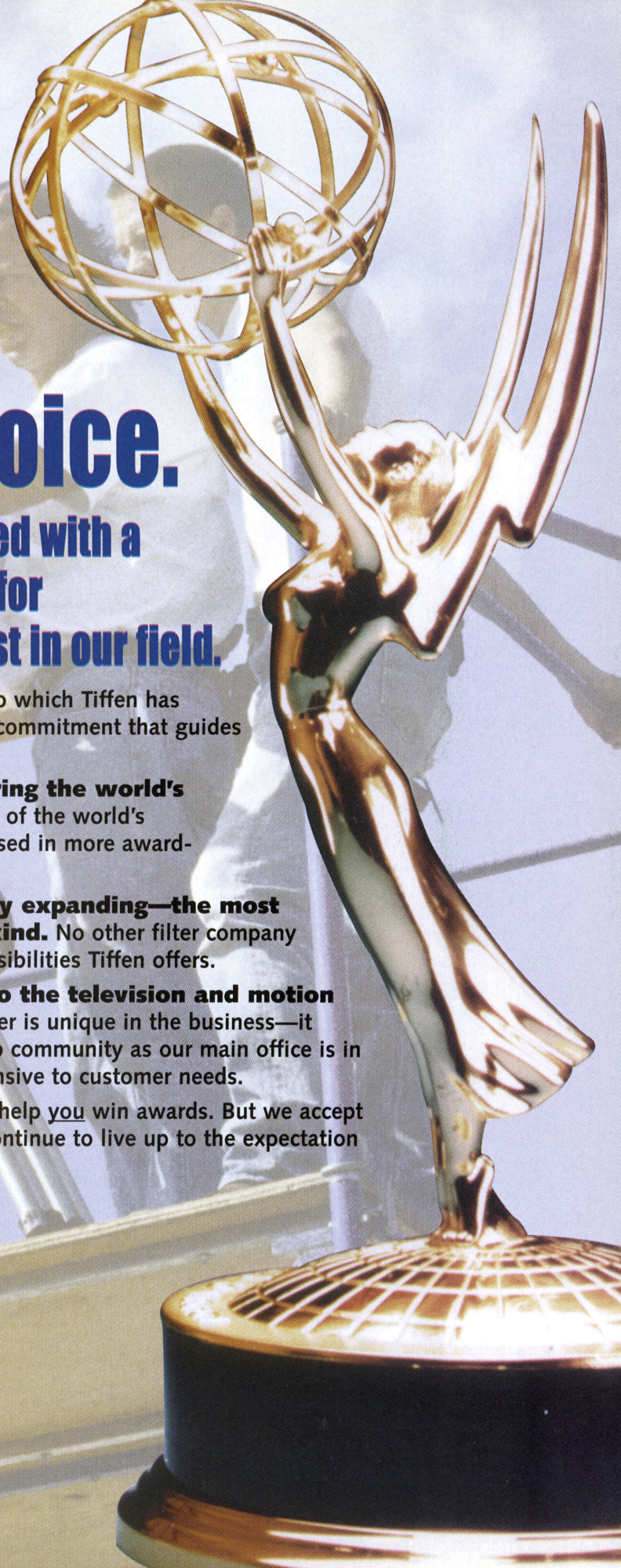
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IDA Student Documentary Achievement Award-winner Aliona van der Horst and Kodak's Janet Anderson at the annual IDA luncheon, held in the atrium at Eastman Kodak's Hollywood headquarters.

consumer-grade digital recording and editing equipment. Leacock has abandoned his Aaton 16mm in favor of a lightweight Sony DV1000 camera, and now edits his work at home on a Macintosh G3. As the means to personally finalize a production with PC software becomes even more economically viable, documentary filmmakers may have greater freedom to define their own budgets.

However, studying this new-found freedom with a cautious eye was *New York Times* Los Angeles bureau chief Todd Purdum, who offered an enlightening summation of the current state of documentaries: "As we celebrate a century of filmed reality, on the edge of a new century, it is worth pausing to remember that we have such images — from World War I to *The War Room* — because they were recorded on film. This medium, however fragile, can still be seen in its original format using the same mechanical processes that prevailed in its infancy. Who knows how long other technologies may last, or how widely available the means to view them may be? Video degrades, and digital technology is changing before our eyes."

Influencing History

The panel "Docs that Shook the World," moderated by Purdum, examined the politically influential non-fiction films that have had an immense effect upon Western society over the past century. "Our topic makes an extravagant claim for the influence of documentaries," said Bruce Davis, executive director of AMPAS, "but I don't think it's an overblown one. Not a single one of

these films achieved the kind of viewership that even a very indifferent narrative feature achieves today, and yet that's not a measure of their effectiveness. The kind of people who tend to see documentary films are people who can, and

is all it takes to shake the world."

The evening took stock of specific historical eras, beginning with early newsreels and Russian silent films, exemplified by clips from *Wreck of the Battleship Maine* (William Paley, 1898), *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (Esther Shub, 1927), and *A Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929).

The segment "Nazi Germany and the Holocaust" featured *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1936), *Churchill's Island* (Stuart Legg, 1941), *Prelude to War* (Frank Capra, 1943) and *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955).

"The Struggle for Civil Rights in America" encapsulated moments from Martin Luther King's famous "I Have A Dream" speech and *The Children Were Watching* (Robert Drew, 1961).

The "Vietnam" section featured scenes from the Oscar-winning *Hearts and Minds* (Peter Davis, 1974) and *The War at Home* (Glenn Silber and Barry Alexander Brown, 1981).

"The Atomic Age and the Environment" looked at mankind's involvement with nuclear arms with *Hiroshima-Nagasaki: August 1945* (1970) and *If You Love this Planet: Dr. Helen Caldicott on Nuclear War* (Kathleen Shannon, 1982), followed by a study of the AIDS crisis with *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (Robert Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, 1988).

Each series of clips was followed by illuminating commentaries. Speakers included documentary historian Eric Barnouw; AFI founding director George Stevens Jr.; Rabbi Marvin Hier, the dean/founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance; Judy Richardson, education director for Blackside, Inc.; filmmaker and activist Gordon Quinn; Kim Campbell, a former Canadian prime minister and IDC/3 keynote speaker; and David I. Schulman, supervising attorney of the AIDS/HIV Discrimination Unit of the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office.

In his introduction, Purdum noted that "more than a century ago, Matthew Brady's photographs of the Civil War first gave Americans an idea of the power of pictures to move people. But that [impact] seems, at times, like nothing

1998 IDA Award Winners

IDA/David L. Wolper Student Documentary Achievement Award: *Dame Met Het Witte Hoedje* (*Lady with the White Hat*) (directed by Aliona van der Horst)

Strand Program Award: *America's Endangered Species: Don't Say Goodbye* (directed by Robert Kenner).

Distinguished Documentary Achievement, Short: *Human Remains* (directed by Jay Rosenblatt).

Distinguished Documentary Achievement, Limited Series: *The Nazis: A Warning from History — Episode 1: Helped into Power* (directed by Laurence Rees/BBC).

ABC News VideoSource Award: *Regret to Inform* (directed by Barbara Sonneborn and Janet Cole).

Pare Lorentz Award: *Nach Saison/Off Season* (directed by Pepe Danquart and Mirjam Quinte).

Career Achievement Award: Sheila Nevins of HBO

IDA Preservation and Scholarship Award: George Stoney of New York University.

Distinguished Documentary Achievement: *Dancemaker* (directed by Matthew Diamond) and *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (directed by Werner Herzog).

do, work to change things. Even though a particular film may not have the power to 'shake the world,' an audience of aroused viewers can provide a very effective nudge, and sometimes a nudge

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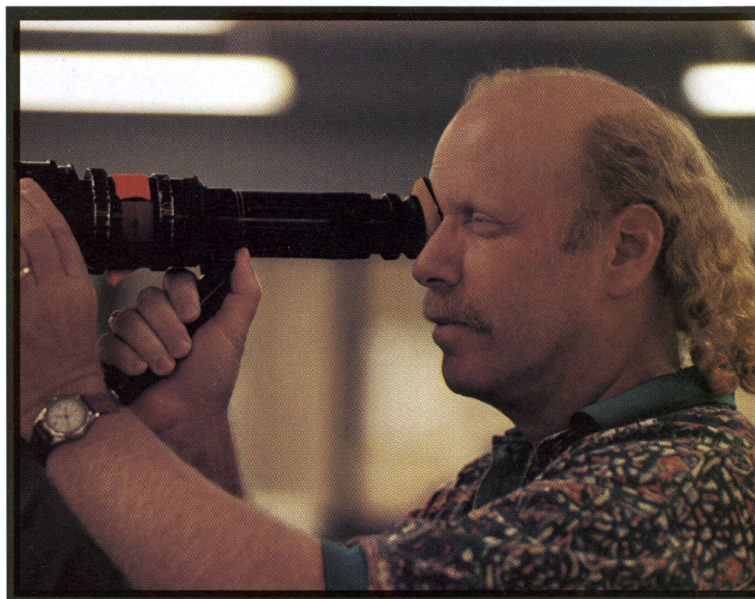
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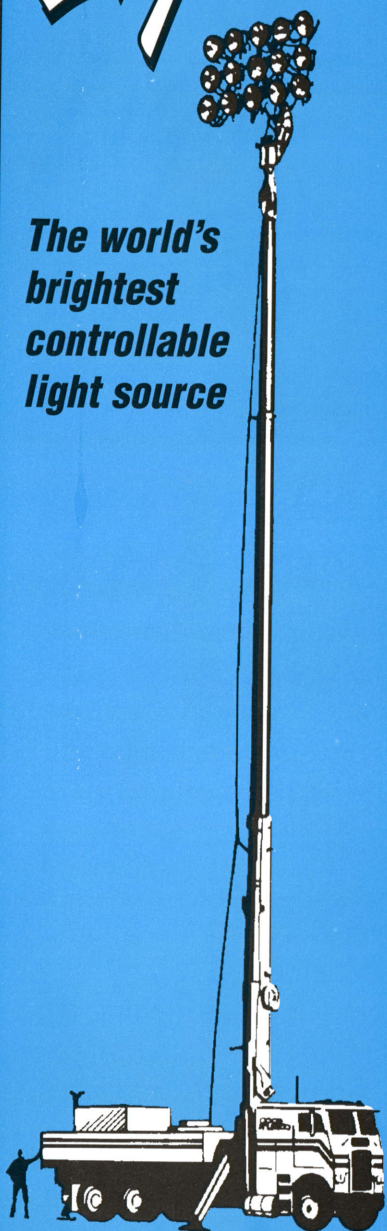
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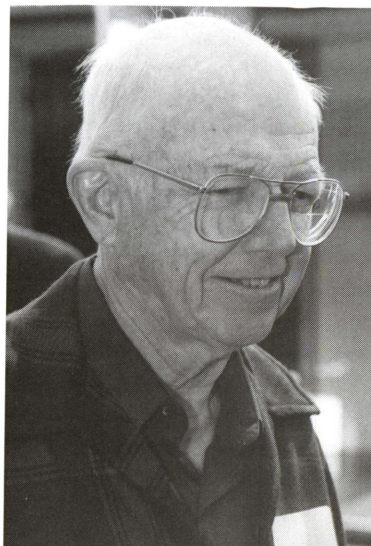
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**Documentarian and IDA 1998
Scholarship and Preservation Award
recipient George Stoney.**

compared to the power of moving pictures themselves. 'It's like writing history with lightning,' President Woodrow Wilson exclaimed upon seeing D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, and that lightning has been cracking in the bottle of camera and projector ever since." Purdum continued with a warning for non-fiction filmmakers: "Documentary films have shaped and changed opinions, governments and even destinies in ways that remain both inspiring and unsettling. A camera alone is unblinking, unthinking, and amoral, but the reality that a camera records can be shaped for both good and ill."

In a keen illustration of film's influence, George Stevens, Jr. spoke of an occasion on which film historian/director Kevin Brownlow arranged a meeting between George Stevens Sr. (*Gunga Din*, *Alice Adams*) and German documentarian Leni Riefenstahl. Stevens Jr. recalled that the two filmmakers spoke openly and comfortably about their craft until Riefenstahl posed a crucial question. "According to Kevin, she asked my father, 'Did you ever see *Triumph of the Will*?' And my father said, 'I saw it one night in the screening room at Columbia Pictures, and the next day I joined the American Army.'"

The younger Stevens then posed this query to the audience: "How does

film affect someone? Does it ever really change someone's life? There is a simple story of a man who was 35 years old, and somehow was awakened to a duty by this film. He was in the Army for three years and was placed in charge of combat photography by General Eisenhower. [Toward the end of his service,] he [and his crew] received orders to go south to a town called Dachau. These relatively young Americans were the first into that camp; it was an unimaginably searing experience, but they photographed it. The fact that those pictures were taken really made impossible the persistent argument that the Holocaust didn't take place. So for someone who had a great career in film, and whose later films were influenced by those experiences, it might be said that [my father's] most important work was the simple recording of those uninflected images that persist today."

Perils of the Pen

During the "Writing for the Documentary" panel, the issue of viewpoint was addressed by Carol Fleisher, whose numerous honors include a Cable ACE award for *The Revolutionary War*. "You're deluding yourself if you think that you don't have a point of view," Fleisher stated. "You impose your point of view with every choice you make about what shots to use, what order to put them in or what words to use — it's impossible to escape. Sometimes you can make a more personal statement, while at other times you need to be very careful about what words you put into your narrator's mouth to make sure that he or she isn't going too far into what is *your* opinion. It's a very delicate line, and you have to watch yourself, because it's tempting to jump up on a soapbox. It does depend on your forum, but I think we have an incredible responsibility to monitor ourselves as writers."

Panel moderator Mark Jonathan Harris (an Academy Award winner in 1997 for *The Long Way Home*) added, "In making historical films, you have to realize that the final view is going to be yours as a filmmaker, and it's going to express both your experience, and the time in

which you are making the film. History changes often, and it is constantly being rewritten from a different vantage point. You have an obligation to get the facts straight, but the interpretation is the responsibility of the filmmaker — and by definition, that is subjective.”

Also sitting on this panel was Roger Holzberg, a writer/producer of various CD-ROM multimedia productions, as well as such large-venue films as *The Living Sea* (which he also adapted to CD-ROM for *Knowledge Adventure*). Much of the discussion concerned the evolution of the writer’s job as documentary moves further into the multimedia realm. Holzberg opined, “As we push toward new digital media, words are becoming a smaller and smaller part of our palette as writers — particularly when working with a large format such as Imax, where a big part of the story is the imagery and not the written word. When you put into play emotions to be drawn from music and scope of images, it’s a different style of writing. What we are moving toward is a true ‘tele-fusion’ — that is, being able to watch your television not in a linear chunk, but integrating Internet capabilities with general television viewing. Interactive broadband in the home on a large scale is only a few years away.”

Eyeing the Future

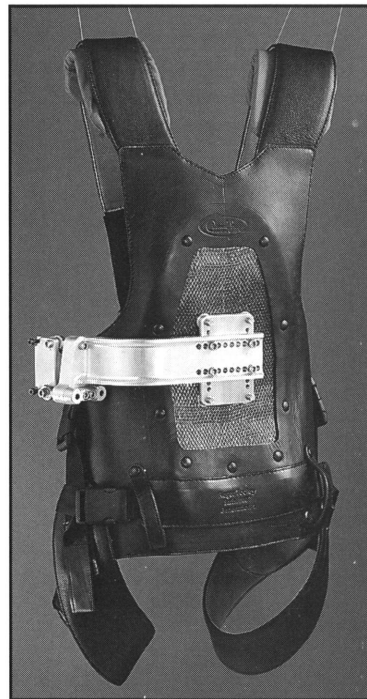
Speaking for a forum entitled “Ask the Filmmaking Experts About the Future,” documentarian Nick Broomfield (*Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madam* and *Kurt and Courtney*) noted, “The documentary movement has constantly re-evolved, redefined itself, and changed its parameters. There aren’t a lot of rules, and the rules that [do exist] are meant to be broken. It’s a very experimental forum — one that I hope will develop more and more in the future.”

Broomfield was joined by Lynne Littman, a four-time Emmy Award winner and the recipient of an Academy Award for *Number Our Days*; Russian filmmaker Marina Goldovskaya, who now teaches at UCLA’s School of Film and Television; Werner Herzog, the noted producer/writer/director of more than 40 films,

including *Aguirre, The Wrath of God* and *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*; Alec Lorimore, the vice president of production and development at MacGillivray Freeman Films, the company behind *The Living Sea*, *To the Limit* and *Everest*; and director Frieda Lee Mock, whose credits include the Academy Award-winning *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*.

Following Broomfield’s comments, Herzog initiated a passionate debate about the validity of the cinéma vérité

style as a means of achieving “truth” in films. “I do believe that ‘documentaries’ will only have a future if filmmakers try to dig deep and explore the basic question that concerns all art in principal — and that is truth,” he maintained. “I believe in departing from what I call the stupidities of cinéma vérité; by dint of fabrication, invention and fantasy, you can actually dig very deep into a very mysterious area which constitutes truth in cinema. We all have to face [the fact that] setting a



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camera at a certain angle is always some sort of manipulation, but there are basic things that the audience needs to know are real."

Mock later added, "For me, filmmaking, whether non-fiction or fiction, is really about the storytelling. The idea of truth is perhaps what unifies all of us, in that we all seek a truth — whether it be through fiction or non-fiction. It's all really just about trying to find the essence of being human."

Goldovskaya then interjected, "I want to say that if you are an artist and you use the cinéma vérité style, you will go very deep to the truth and find something that you are looking for. But there are [many other possible] methods of doing that. Everybody has their own truth."

From the audience, vérité pioneer Albert Maysles stood up and addressed the panel with this pertinent point: "To me, it's such a simple and common-sense sort of thing to be an observer and not be afraid of telling the truth. It's not difficult to tell the truth, it's not difficult to observe it and it's not difficult to portray it on film."

New Entries to National Film Registry

For the 10th consecutive year, the Library of Congress has designated 25 motion pictures for preservation in the National Film Registry, in recognition of their historic, cultural or aesthetic significance — the Registry's roster now includes some 250 titles. The presentation was delivered by Librarian of Congress James Billington at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills, California. He selected the entries personally from a nomination list offered by moviegoers, film scholars, archivists, and the National Preservation Board itself. This year's entries are quite varied in terms of style, genre and subject matter, given the recent expansion of the registry's dictate about the type of films which can qualify. "What the selections have in common is their influence on the language of the movies," noted Billington. "Americans have been particularly good at speaking that language and

coming up with new and innovative ways of expression. It's a great pleasure to make up the list, but it's also very taxing to decide on which films to select."

The 1998 Registry inductees include the following silent pictures: *Westinghouse Works* (1904, shot by G.W. "Billy" Bitzer), an industrial on a Pittsburgh production plant; the spiritual saga *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912, George K. Hollister); Charlie Chaplin's *The Immigrant* (1917, ASC members Roland Totheroh and William Foster); the Tom Mix adventure *Sky High* (1922, Benjamin Kline, ASC); *The Lost World* (1925, Arthur Edeson, ASC), based on the Arthur Conan Doyle novel; the comedy *Pass the Gravy* (1928); and *The Phantom of the Opera*, starring Lon Chaney (1925, Milton Bridenbecker, and ASC members Virgil Miller and Charles J. Van Enger). New inductees from the sound era are *Steamboat Willie* (1928), the first animated appearance of Mickey Mouse; James Cagney wreaking havoc in *The Public Enemy* (1931, Devereaux Jennings, ASC); *42nd Street* (1933, Sol Polito, ASC), a behind-the-scenes peek at the life of a chorus girl; the Shirley Temple tearjerker *Little Miss Marker* (1934, Alfred Gilks, ASC); the horror classic *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935, John J. Mescall, ASC); newsreel footage of the *Tacoma Narrows Bridge Collapse* (1940, Barney Elliot and co-workers at The Camera Shop), William Wellman's dark Western *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943, Arthur Miller, ASC); the World War II air-raid drama *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949; Leon Shamroy, ASC); the film noir shoot-'em-up *Gun Crazy* (1949, Russell Harlan, ASC), and Ida Lupino's suspense-filled road film *The Hitchhiker* (1953, Nicholas Musuraca, ASC).

The Registry's eclectic taste is evidenced with the inclusion of *The City* (1939), a 45-minute examination of Manhattan filmed for that year's World's Fair, directed and photographed by Willard Van Dyke and Ralph Steiner; *Modesta* (1956), a 35-minute Puerto Rican production about women rebelling against their inconsiderate spouses; *Dead Birds* (1964, Eliot Elisofon), an ethnographic study of a Western New

Guinea's Dani tribe; D.A. Pennebaker's Bob Dylan documentary *Don't Look Back* (1967, Pennebaker, Jones and Howard Alk); and Charles and Ray Eames's expressionist short *The Powers of Ten* (1978), which features a series of images that grow and shrink by factors of ten.

The more modern fare added to the Registry was Dennis Hopper's counterculture classic *Easy Rider* (1969, Laszlo Kovacs, ASC); Peter Bogdanovich's black-and-white small-town study *The Last Picture Show* (1971, Robert Surtees, ASC); and the crossdressing romantic comedy *Tootsie* (1982, Owen Roizman, ASC) starring Dustin Hoffman.

International Widescreen Festival Winners

The France 3/Odissea documentary *A Girl Against the Mafia* took top honors — the Golden Rembrandt Award — at the 1998 International Widescreen Festival Le Nombre d'Or Awards, which were held in Amsterdam last September. Produced by the Palermo, Italy-based Marco Amenta for the French Channel FR3, *A Girl Against the Mafia* was inspired by the diaries of Rita Atria, a heroic 17-year-old girl murdered for rebelling against the infamous Sicilian organized crime syndicate. The Silver Rembrandt prize went to the British company Green Umbrella for their co-production with the BBC Natural History Unit of *The Temple Troop*, a documentary about a family of macaque monkeys who inhabit the forest around a ruined city in Sri Lanka.

The jury was chaired by Stefan Felsenthal, the former head of theater and music of ZDF. Also seated on the jury were director of photography Dante Spinotti, ASC, AIC, British drama producer Michael Wearing, Italian producer Andrea Andermann, Japanese producer Aki Yamada, Irish producer/executive Lelia Doolan and German sound expert Leo Danilenko.

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Trouble in Paradise



Director Jonathan Frakes and cinematographer Matt Leonetti, ASC reenlist the Federation's finest to protect a utopian culture in *Star Trek: Insurrection*.

by Andrew O. Thompson

Photography by Elliott Marks

Within the *Star Trek* universe, the United Federation of Planets' all-encompassing Prime Directive declares a policy of non-interference during the exploration of strange new worlds. Over the course of the *Trek* saga's long history, however, this decree has proven to be of little consequence if one happens to be at the helm of the starship *Enterprise*. This routine defiance of Starfleet protocol is reflected in the title of the ninth feature film based on the legendary 1960s television show created by writer/producer Gene Roddenberry; in *Insurrection*, Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) risks a court-martial to prevent an entire race of peaceful people from being uprooted off their Shangri-La-like homeworld.

The tale opens on the pastoral planet Ba'ku, where Lt. Commander

Photos courtesy of Paramount Pictures.

Data (Brent Spiner) is a member of a cultural survey team observing the populace. An ethical quandary causes the android officer to go haywire and begin persecuting his colleagues.

Upon learning of Data's dilemma, Captain Picard reroutes the *Enterprise* to Ba'ku. After rescuing the android and setting his programming straight, Picard and his crew conduct their own sociological study. They discover that the idyllic planet is enveloped in a life-giving energy field emanating from the rings encircling the globe, which endows the Ba'ku people with eternal youth.

Meanwhile, Starfleet Admiral Dougherty (Anthony Zerbe) and the Federation have struck a tenuous alliance with the Son'a, a ruthless warrior species afflicted with a grotesque genetic condition that threatens their continued survival. The Son'a and their embittered leader, Ru'afo (F. Murray Abraham), plot to displace the Ba'ku people and steal the planet's life-giving energy so that it can be processed for their consumption — with the subsequent proceeds to be split equally between the Federation and the Son'a.

Learning that this act will leave Ba'ku inhospitable for generations, Picard views it as a direct violation of the Prime Directive, and resolves to defy his orders and protect the planet and its people at any cost — be it his career or even his life.

Leading this *Insurrection* is actor/director Jonathan Frakes (familiar as the *Enterprise*'s first officer, Commander William T. Riker), who is following up his successful feature debut on *Star Trek: First Contact* (see AC Dec. '96). To handle the cinematographic duties on this \$65 million Paramount production, Frakes conscripted his own "Number One": director of photography Matt Leonetti, ASC, who had added a distinctive look to that previous *Trek* adventure. By

continuing their working relationship, the pair have become the first director/cinematographer team to shoot two *Trek* feature films together.

A veteran cameraman, Leonetti's diverse credits also include *Breaking Away*, *Poltergeist*, *Jagged Edge*, *Weird Science*, *Extreme Prejudice*, *Red Heat*, *Johnny Handsome*, *Another 48 HRS.*, *Dead Again*, *Leap of Faith*, *Angels in the Outfield*, *A Low Down Dirty Shame*, *Strange Days*, *Fled* and *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*.

Continuing with the basic photographic approach he used on *First Contact*, Leonetti shot *Insurrection* in anamorphic with Panavision cameras. However, while the cameraman had previous experience in creating a 24th-century lighting style, the distinctly different dramatic tones of these back-to-back films precluded a strict visual through-line. Frakes notes, "This script is much more romantic and lush in tone — *Insurrection* is an action/adventure/romance piece, while *First Contact* was essentially a horror film that had lots of staccato cutting, and dark settings with shadows and purple hues. The Ba'ku planet is a pastoral setting, and Matt and I both played into that with lots of lyrical camera movement and golden colors. Obviously, we were using sunlight on most of the planet exteriors, but even in the little homes of the Ba'ku we used firelight. We also shot scenes much wider on *Insurrection*. A lot of that had to do with us being outside, but I wasn't afraid of one-shots, or of not always having the safe coverage."

The Undiscovered Countryside

Insurrection features the most elaborate use of location shooting in a *Trek* feature since *The Voyage Home* (AC Dec. '86), the bulk of which was set in and around contemporary San Francisco. For this new film, two separate sites in California — Lake

Sherwood in Thousands Oaks and the Lake Sabrina area in the Sierra Nevada Mountains — represented the idyllic Ba'ku world.

However, this is not to say that creating a sense of "paradise" was easy. The filmmakers had to fight against the sun on a daily basis as the 1998 production took place from April to July, with the outdoor filming scheduled for May and June. Time was often spent waiting for the sun to swing around and place the actors in proper lighting. "Matt and I chose the locations based on our ability to maximize the sunlight," Frakes recalls. "Overall, we tried to find locations that spent more time in backlight than frontlight. Having frontlight didn't matter as much for group shots, but if the scene had the *Enterprise* crew, or our leading lady, Anij [actress Donna Murphy], then we definitely preferred to use backlight."

Taking his cues from the film's plot, Leonetti describes, "This planet rejuvenates the human body and makes people look young as long as they stay put — some characters have been there for 300 years, but look as if they are only about 40 years old. Given that idea, we did lean towards a lush, green look, primarily using backlight [from the sun] and putting diffusion on the lens." After a battery of tests, the cinematographer

Opposite: Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) observes Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) as she takes a life-reading scan on a fallen Son'a soldier. **Below:** Director of photography Matthew Leonetti, ASC takes a meter reading on Stewart and co-star Donna Murphy while on location.



Trouble in Paradise



A behind-the-scenes view of the Ba'ku village as seen through a "duckblind," a camouflaged observation post used by Starfleet to surreptitiously study the pastoral people.

opted to shoot the Ba'ku environs through a 1/2 Tiffen Black ProMist filter to soften the imagery captured on Kodak's fine-grained 100 ASA EXR 5248.

Leonetti favors long lenses, and primarily deployed Panavision's C-series anamorphic primes, partly because their light weight was well-suited to the film's extensive use of Steadicam. He notes that "for scenes set on Ba'ku, we used some really long lenses — up to a 600mm and 800mm — because they give everything a bit more sparkle and the images are prettier. Just to do a close-up in anamorphic, you have to use a 180mm to get in tighter, but most of the movie was shot with 50mm, 75mm, 180mm and 400mm lenses."

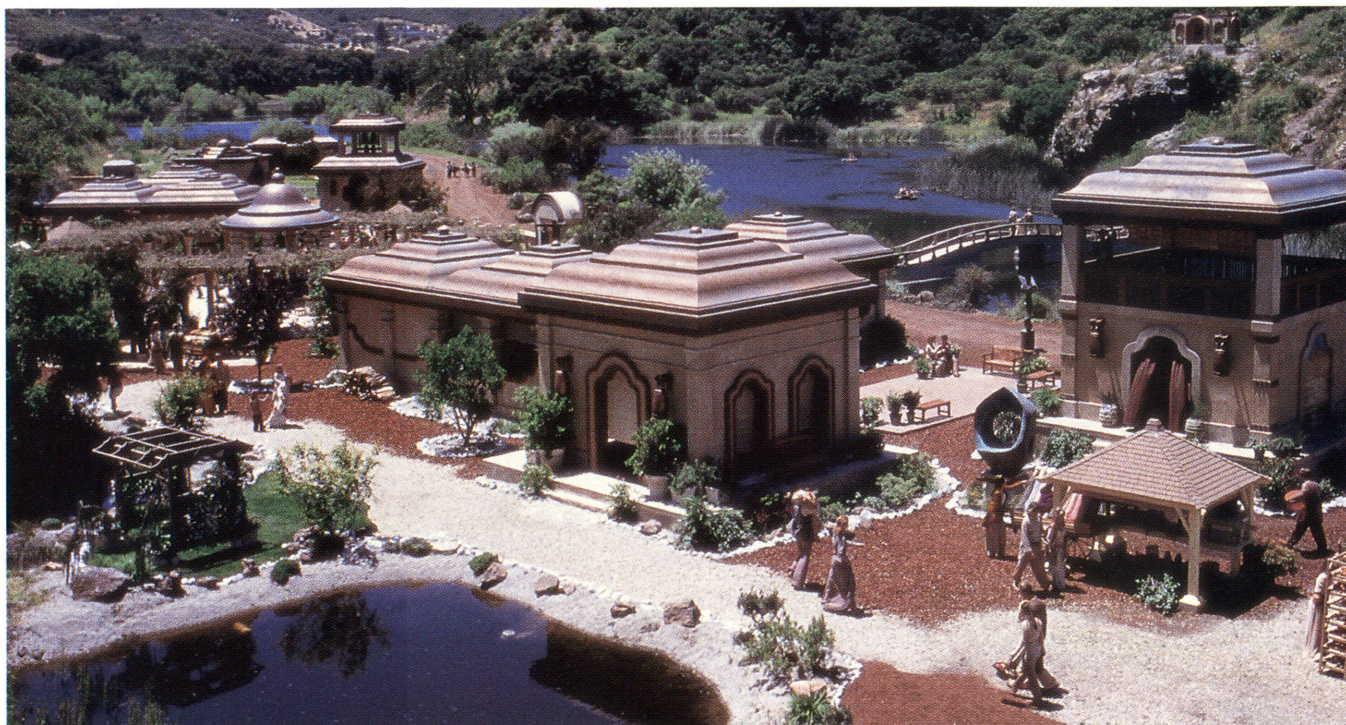
For one effects-filled sequence, Leonetti was required to use a spherical 50mm lens. In this romantic scene, Picard and Anij stand beside a waterfall while she uses her psychic powers to essentially "stall" time, making the water and other scenic elements seemingly slow and freeze in place. The cameraman recalls, "The effects people didn't want to have to deal with anamorphic [plates] when doing the composite

work for the visual effects, which include beams and shafts of light. They asked us to shoot the scene with a spherical lens, explaining that after they did their work, they could go back and anamorphosize the image." (See "Effecting an *Insurrection*," beginning on page 40).

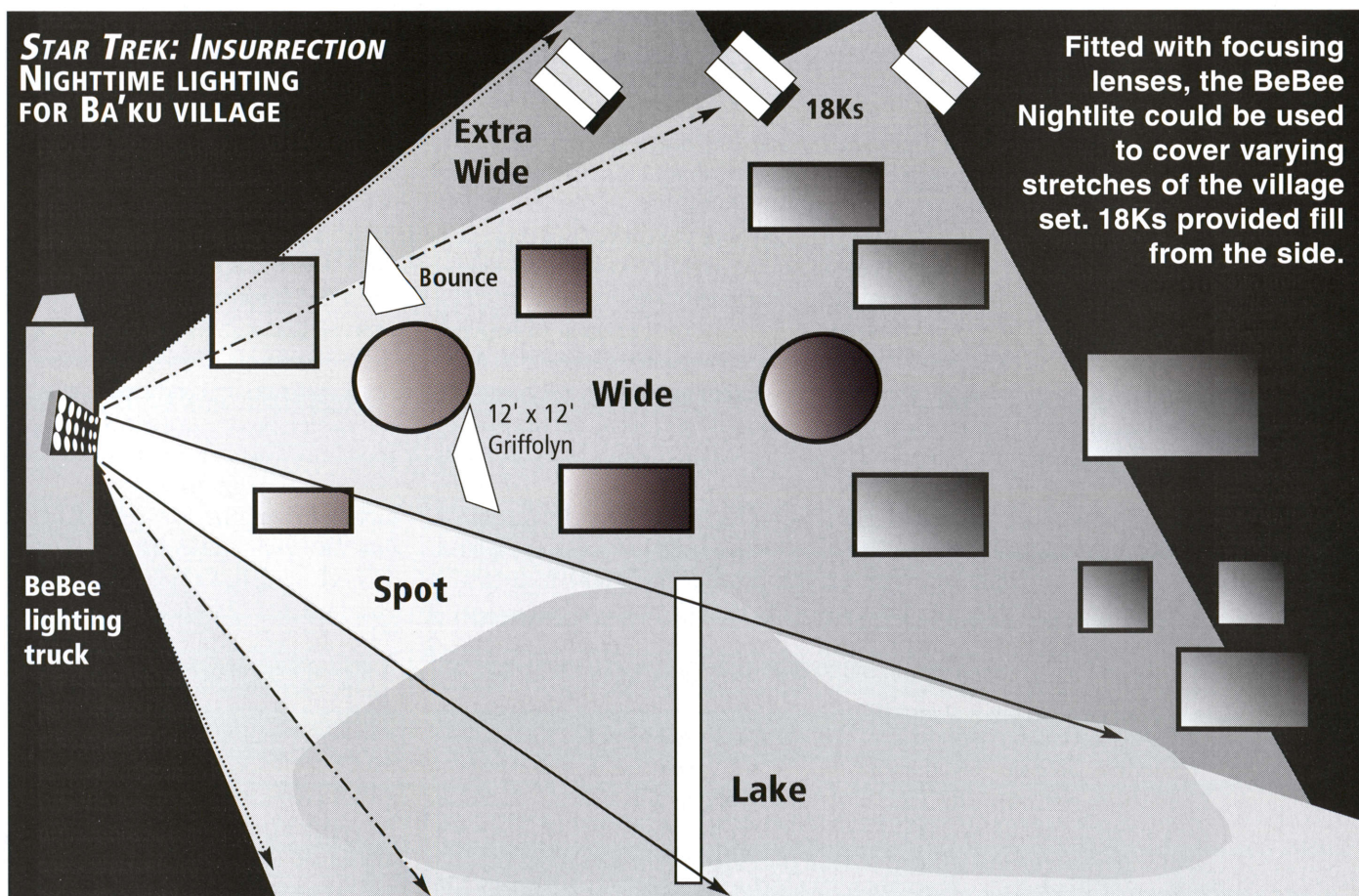
Much of the action on Ba'ku involves the Starfleet officers defending the indigenous people from various phases of Son'a attack. Leonetti therefore had to compose some shots around CG effects that would later be composited into the sequence. As a result, he had to erect greenscreens for several scenes shot on location. One such case was a night exterior as the Ba'ku attempt to elude capture by making a mass exodus into a remote mountainous region. Several Ba'ku are seen running towards camera as they are "tagged" with markers by Son'a drones buzzing overhead, and then beamed off the planet's surface. In order to shoot the elements needed for the insertion of both the computer-generated Son'a drones and the transporter effects, Leonetti and his crew "built a 60' by 40' greenscreen. We then brought in a

150' crane, hung the lights right on it — four Far Cyc lights with 216 diffusion paper and full plus-green gels, and four Master Lights for the end — and just pulled up the whole apparatus, including the lights and greenscreen. We did it with a crane because we thought that would be the cheapest and fastest way, since the greenscreen had to come back out for us to do the clean pass. You can't touch the lights once the scene has been lit, because it all has to match [throughout the various passes]. But I also had to make sure that there was enough room on the top of the frame for the drones to be flying through."

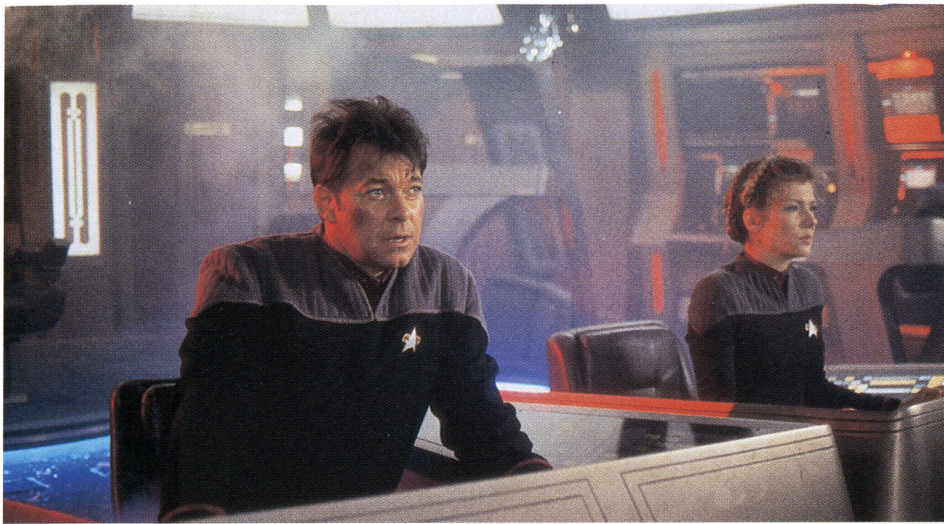
Another scene featuring the attacking drones became a lesson in location logistics. The sequence in question was shot over three days a 10,000' mountain peak in Mammoth, which became the site of a phaser-sliding, Sergio Leone-style standoff between the mechanical marauders and the *Enterprise* crew. Even from the base camp parking lot, the mountain's peak — another 2,000' in elevation — could only be accessed by helicopter, and each flight had a maximum load of just four people. All of the equipment had to be carted



The center of the Ba'ku set was designed by Herman Zimmerman and erected in the Lake Sherwood area of Thousand Oaks, California. Leonetti's lighting schematic for night exteriors is detailed in the diagram below.



Trouble in Paradise



Commander Riker (actor/director Jonathan Frakes) takes the helm of the *Enterprise* as the starship is attacked by Son'a warships. During "red alert" situations, the set was brightened with tweenie and baby fixtures gelled in primary red.

in by chopper four days prior to shooting, and remained on the location overnight. Luckily, Leonetti was spared from having to set up greenscreens, since the protagonists and the CG-generated assailants were never seen in the same frame; photographically, all the sequence required were locked-off background plates of the snowcapped mountain ranges.

For night sequences set in the Ba'ku village grounds, Leonetti had to light up an expansive zone surrounded by greenery. The community itself was a cluster of open-air stucco structures influenced by Far Eastern architecture and drafted by production designer Herman Zimmerman (whose credits include the three previous *Trek* films, as well as the TV series *Deep Space Nine* and *Voyager*). While working within the Angeles National Forest on *First Contact*, Leonetti had to contend with the verdant foliage absorbing an abundance of his illumination. In that film, however, the forest doubled as a 21st-century refugee camp equipped with makeshift generators, thus allowing for a source-lighting approach. The Luddite lifestyle of the Ba'ku, however, left Leonetti with little motivation for his sources. "There are no streetlights in the town, because technology of any kind is

not permitted," the cinematographer details. "The Ba'ku have gone back to a very simple and serene way of life. We therefore had to come up with moonlight which, naturally, we had to simulate. When lighting such an effect, you can only use one source, and only light one side of people's faces. Consequently, you've got to put in some other lights so that the audience can actually see the people. Our biggest problem was the fact that the village set was about 700' long by about 250' wide. We got back over 1,000' with the camera, and we could see the entire town plus a lake to the left of it. So where do you put the lights?"

Leonetti resolved to backlight the borough by deploying a BeBee NightLite truck (situated some 250' from the set's edge, see diagram on page 33) consisting of 15 4K HMIs, each with a nearly 360-degree turning radius. In preproduction, he and his longtime gaffer, Pat Blymer, spent four hours one night testing the fixture's range of throw on the Paramount lot. Leonetti's background in lamp designing and building (as a co-owner of Sunray Manufacturing) inspired him to utilize three special lenses — spot, medium and wide — on each of the BeBee's 4K heads. Given that the widest-set lenses lent the largest light spread, yet the least amount of ambiance, the

cameraman applied the medium and spot lenses when he wanted to illuminate areas further away from the camera. To create a slight fill light on the opposite side of the town, he aimed in four 18Ks from alongside a hill parallel to the lake.

"We also had to light the front of the main building somehow, otherwise it would have been dark," Leonetti adds. "To do that, we'd use Master Lights or smaller HMIs and bounce them into a 12' by 12' Griffolyn and back onto the building. We'd also hide lights behind other buildings and near bushes, primarily Master Lights bounced into 4' by 4' white cards, along with a few 1K and 2K zip lights. To light the side of bridge, we'd hide 4K Sunray HMIs and bounce them into the water so that we'd get that sparkling effect. The special effects guys would then agitate the water to break up [the lighting patterns on the lake's surface]. We wouldn't put as much of an exposure there because we didn't want it to be as bright as the immediate source. However, we did try to imply that it was all coming from one source, which, obviously, you can't *really* do."

The Wrath of the Son'a

For interior scenes, Leonetti selected Kodak's Vision 500T 5279 stock because "it's got better resolution and better blacks [than EXR 5298], but the latitude is just as good and it actually has less grain." The new emulsion didn't impact the moody lighting he had devised for the *Enterprise* interiors on *First Contact*, which had a look that Frakes described as a "Das Boot style." This time around, while lighting the Bridge, the Engineering section, and the ship's corridors, the cameraman positioned multiple open-faced 407 babies at 90-degree angles behind gridded grates, allowing the Starfleet principals to pass through highlights of geometric patterns.

Practical lighting was carefully

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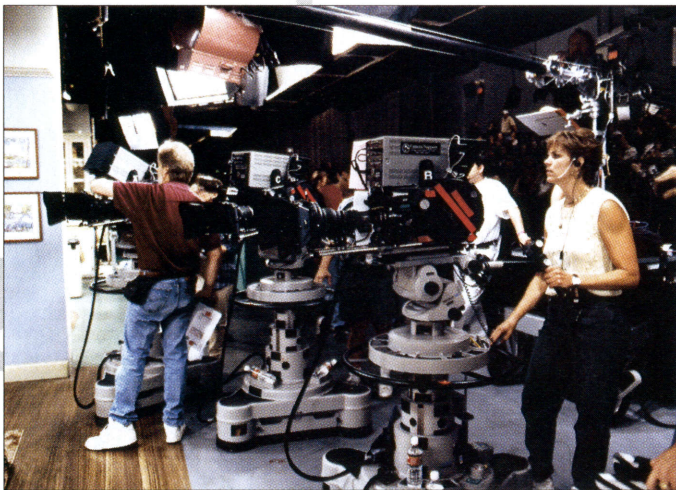


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* (Math: Sitcoms have approximately 15 scenes per episode, which will average 3 takes/camera starts per scene, on 4 cameras, at a conservative average of 10 sec. per collective slate)

Trouble in Paradise



Above: Son'a commander Ru'afo (F. Murray Abraham) stands alone within the giant bridge of his starship. For added effect, Leonetti shined 1K nook lights (covered in steel blue gels) through the hole patterns in the walls. Right: Counselor Troi (Marina Sirtis), Riker, Picard and Crusher head off to a diplomatic function aboard the *Enterprise*. Leonetti aimed fixtures through side-mounted gratings to create grilled patterns on the actors.

integrated into the sets. Instrument panels were brightened from behind with MR-16s. The crew built 3200°K fluorescents into the walls, but Leonetti sometimes substituted them with daylight-balanced Kino Flos to create a bluish effect. The steps beneath the Bridge had an outline of dimmer-controlled neon piping, which gave off a slight electric-blue cast. This tubing had to be refit with electronic ballasts both for dimming purposes and to avoid flicker problems provoked by changes in frame rate. Gaffer Pat Blymer adds, "Above the Bridge set, there were 12 pie-shaped ceiling pieces made out of muslin, and we had a 5K senior hitting into each one of them — this gave us about 12 footcandles of ambient light throughout the entire set. We then hung lights as needed to accentuate the actors, usually tweenies with special diffusion cones on them. Jordan Cronenweth [ASC], who shot *Blade Runner*, had these devices he called 'Croney cones.' They were 5' long and made out of tinfoil, and he put them on the front of seniors and 10Ks. The paper diffusion on the front, either 216 or 250, softened up the light. Through the years, we made our

own version of them out of showcard, which we call 'phoney cones.'"

Leonetti also had to produce the aftermath of an extended battle between the Federation flagship and Son'a space vessels. When the *Enterprise* is on "red alert" status, the window paneling which lines the set flickers intermittently in a scarlet shade. The cameraman augmented the set's pre-existing flashing system with tweenies and 1K babies (gelled primary red) that created winking crimson rimlights all around the set. He also lowered the overall light level so that the Bridge was illuminated mainly by bright shafts produced by

30- and 50-watt MR-16 lights. "By this point in the script, there had been some damage to the *Enterprise*," says Blymer. "A lot of the lights had gone off [due to a power drain on the ship], and we were in a much more 'down' mode. We just had those MR-16 sources on the ground, because all of the toplights were off. The red illumination in the scene became much deeper due to the fact that there wasn't that much white light."

The mood of crisis was intensified by flooding the set with layers of smoke, seemingly emanating from explosions and fried instrument components. During detonations, Leonetti sometimes overcranked the camera to 48 fps to accentuate the action — particularly in the Engineering Room, where energy discharges set crewmembers ablaze, causing them to plummet from elevated platforms and careen into bulkheads.

In addition to these in-camera effects, Leonetti shook his Panavision camera by hand to simulate the effect of the *Enterprise*'s hull being pelted with phaser fire. As all *Trek* fans know, this tried-and-true method was a staple of the original 1960s series, when directors of photography Gerald Perry Finnerman, ASC and A.C. Francis, ASC often employed it to famous effect, in conjunction with visual illusions created by ASC greats





Above: The nefarious Admiral Dougherty (Anthony Zerbe) and Ru'afo confer within a Son'a spacecraft, which was suffused with a deep blue palette to differentiate it from the Starfleet ships. Below: Ru'afo and his cohort plot to destroy the Ba'ku people. Leonetti often illuminated these aliens with harsh, white toplight to accentuate their disfigured faces.

Linwood Dunn and Howard A. Anderson II.

While lighting the Son'a spaceship interiors, Leonetti took a slightly divergent tactic. He first conferred with production designer Zimmerman, who decided to differentiate the alien cruisers by patterning their walls with a series of holes some 5" in diameter. Leonetti backed these with 1000 H paper, through which he aimed 1K nook lights gelled with a shade of steel blue. He also opted for harsh overhead lighting in order to accent the decrepit condition of the Son'a

skin. "We purposely kept top light on the Son'a to accentuate their aging — it shadowed and emphasized their wrinkles," the cameraman explains. "We also used white light [from the top] instead of blue because it wouldn't look right to have a bunch of blue-faced aliens running around the ship. At one point, though we did have a very light blue gel on the ceilings, so that there was light blue sheen [in the area] when we photographed them. We had discussed having three gradations of blue: a deep blue on the bottom part of the wall; a lighter blue two-thirds

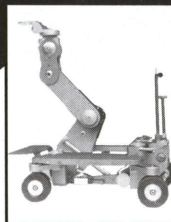


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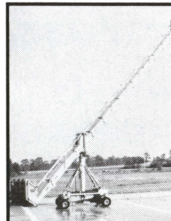
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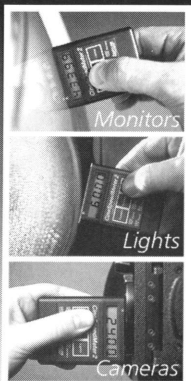
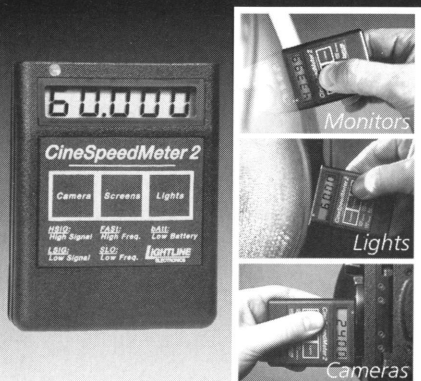
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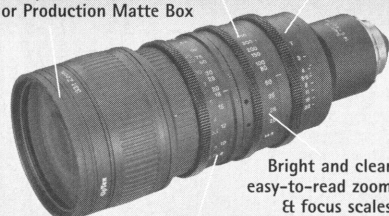
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Trouble in Paradise

of the way up; and then an even whiter blue on the ceiling. But when we changed the light [in that manner], the blue became too strong."

This indigo palette carried through to the Son'a science ship's Energy Collector, an immense oblong-shaped arena with a hollow core, where Picard engages Ru'afo in a hand-to-hand struggle while attempting to disarm the deadly device. Situated on Paramount's Stage 18, the Collector had a symmetrical shape, but to create its lighting, Leonetti requested that only half the set be constructed completely; the reverses were done by shooting the set after its paneling and instrumentation had been redressed. The Collector set was 50' high, 80' long and 40' wide, and consisted of an intricate honeycomb of triangular steel grids with welded seams. "We left one end of the set open — a section probably about 30' wide from top to bottom — and wrapped the rest of it in gray muslin," Leonetti says. "We then hung four light Far Cys all around it, put steel blue gels on them and backlit the whole set from top to bottom — that's how we 'painted' the walls with light. We really kept the density down because that would make the color very rich. It didn't have much effect on the actors, who really just had a blue rim on them. In fact, one of the visual effects guys, who works on either *Deep Space Nine* or *Voyager*, said to me, 'You know, it's so blue that we could use it as bluescreen.'"

When shooting downward from the top of the Collector set — for an overhead perspective of Picard and Ru'afo scaling the steep scaffolding — Leonetti laid greenscreen on the floor to fill what would be seen in frame. (During some additional filming, he simply had the entire surface painted green instead.) In postproduction, this space would display an extension of the gridwork,

as well as celestial formations swirling below. The cameraman recalls, "That sequence was quite a lighting job, because we were shooting straight down with these ribs, which only had a 4 to 6"-wide area inside for us to place lights. We couldn't light from above because all of the grids between the lights and the floor would have been lit. We had to get up underneath [the webbing] and in and around corners to hide a lot of little nook lights, a few master lights and some UV fluorescents here and there. It was tricky because we also had to light the greenscreen fairly evenly — otherwise it wouldn't have pulled the matte properly." Additionally, the fixtures had to be repositioned each time Picard and Ru'afo ascended to a higher level of the three-floored set. Rigging the Collector set also presented safety concerns: while working from plywood platforms, key grip Lloyd Barcroft and his crew had to be harnessed to the railings.

After two tours of duty onboard the *Enterprise*, Leonetti feels that he has a much better command of the cinematographic challenges presented by such voyages. "It's always more difficult to do something the first time around," he relates. "This time, we didn't have to go through the learning curve of, let's say, the Engineering Room, in terms of knowing where to put lights — either hiding them or just not lighting so high up. Because *Insurrection* had such a different story [than *First Contact*], we learned more about the logistics than the overall style, which really depends upon what's in the film. Thankfully, we were doing something different rather than just repeating ourselves." ■



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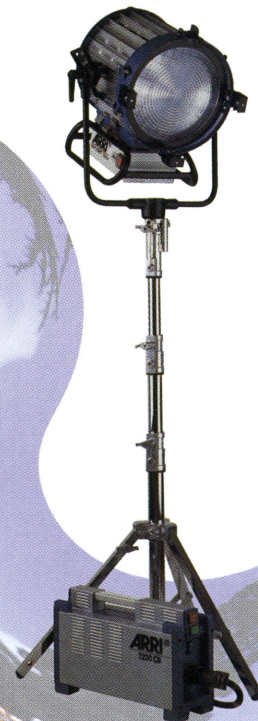
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The ninth entry in Paramount Pictures' ongoing, effects-heavy, *Star Trek* feature-film franchise, *Insurrection* is the third to star the cast of the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (along with several crew members from sister series *Deep Space Nine*). This time out, the lion's share of the visual

effects chores were assigned to Blue Sky/VIFX (*Alien: Resurrection* and *The X-Files*, covered in AC Nov. 1997 and July '98, respectively) and Santa Barbara Studios (*Spawn*, *500 Nations*).

Santa Barbara Studios handled over 100 space effects, which meant taking some of the ships in the *Trek* universe entirely into the CG realm

for the first time. (Industrial Light & Magic mixed and matched physical and CG models on the two previous films; see AC Dec. '96 and April '95.) Meanwhile, for scenes set on the alien world of Ba'ku, Blue Sky/VIFX oversaw some 200-plus shots, which include phaser fire, facial and character animation, and creating

Effecting an Insurrection

The new *Star Trek* adventure travels at warp speed to digitally-enhanced worlds aboard an all-CG armada of spacecraft.

by Ron Magid

Images courtesy of Santa Barbara Studios.



vast CG landscapes. The company also created CGI models for Son'a's mechanical drones and spacecraft — shuttles, the Solar Collector, and a holographic ship. The Blue Sky/VIFX team also collaborated with John Eaves of the Paramount art department on the holoship design, using his concept illustration as a guide for designing and constructing a 3-D maquette that was scanned and used as a starting point for conceiving a 3-D ship model.

In a supporting role, Pacific Ocean Post, veterans of the various *Trek* TV series, handled additional effects work, including transporter beam-ins and beam-outs.

Santa Barbara Studios is no stranger to the *Trek* universe either, having created the main title sequences for both the *Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine* series, as well as the spectacular stellar cartography-room

sequence for *Star Trek: Generations*. To complete their contributions to the latest *Trek* feature on schedule, however, Santa Barbara marshaled 25 artists under founder/visual effects supervisor John Grower. "This was the first time the filmmakers had contemplated creating the spaceships entirely with CG," Grower explains. "In addition to the *Enterprise*, we're showing a first look at the Captain's Yacht, which fits in the underside of the *Enterprise's* saucer section. Plus, there's a new Federation Shuttle, a new Federation Scout Ship, and the alien Son'a ships. These new craft had to be designed by John Eaves and then approved, which happened during principal photography."

The only Federation spacecraft that previously existed as a CG model was the *Enterprise*, created by ILM for *Star Trek: First Contact*. "ILM actually released their *Enterprise*

database to us, which was very nice of them," Grower says appreciatively. "It was very helpful in the beginning, because we had all these animatics to create. However, their *Enterprise* was a fairly low-resolution model, and while we originally thought, 'Maybe we can just add to this database,' that process became more trouble than it was worth, so we had Viewpoint Data Labs come down and actually redigitize the *Enterprise* using the original miniature."

As ILM had done on *Star Trek: First Contact*, Santa Barbara Studios' artists applied photographic textures from the original miniature to their CG *Enterprise*. Grower recalls, "We shot about 50 2¼" negs of the model, then pieced them all back together on the computer and applied them to this giant wireframe of the ship. We then painted out the seams and parts that didn't match colorwise."

As for the other Federation and Son'a ships, Paramount's Art Department delivered fairly simple drawings to Santa Barbara Studios, whose modelers then had to interpret John Eaves' 2-D designs in 3-D cyberspace. "John sent us elevation views and one or two ¾ perspective drawings of each ship, but we had to do a lot of deduction work," Grower says. "The Son'a Flagship and Battleships had very complex shapes and all of these incredible compound curves, which didn't appear in the plan views. They're thin in one dimension and very wide and long in the other, kind of like a trilobite. The biggest challenge was that the Son'a ships didn't look the same from one angle to the next, so if we rotated around them a little bit, their profile changed because they had hundreds of compound curves that hooked together to form their shape. Getting it all to flow involved a ton of work and a very long modeling process."

For all of these reasons, Grower and company decided to model the Federation and alien

The starship *Enterprise* enters the Briar Patch, a giant nebula with immense glowing pillars. The CG ship was created by Santa Barbara Studios. The nebula was constructed with multiple matte paintings mixed with a custom renderer/shader developed for Mental Ray, and then touched up with Alias/Wavefront's Artisan paint software.



Effecting an Insurrection

spacecraft using Alias/Wavefront's new Maya software. "Each ship was made up of lots of nurb surfaces, and the databases were hundreds of megabytes per ship," Grower explains. "These models were very heavy, but Maya allowed us to efficiently structure and organize the data. We went through several iterations [of the ship designs] before we got approval, and Maya helped a lot there as well. Once we got the ships approved, of course, we had to make them look real."

To effectively map the textures over their CG spaceships' complex geometry, Santa Barbara Studios developed a variation of a fairly complicated technique that several effects firms are starting to employ, using what Grower calls "slide projectors." Instead of wrapping a "bearskin rug" of texture maps around their wireframe, they merely "project" the appropriate texture onto the part of the model that can be seen from a particular angle at a particular moment. "Imagine a spaceship with all of these slide projectors pointed at various parts of it, projecting high-resolution images which dissolve from one projector to the next where they overlap so we don't see any seams," Grower states. "That allows us to have infinite detail as we rotate around the ship, without all of the stretching problems that occur when we wrap a flat object around 3-D geometry. It was imperative for us to use this approach because of the multi-curved surfaces of the ships. Also, instead of having a texture for every nurb surface, which is what we did before — and there might be hundreds — this technique enabled us to simultaneously project onto several nurb surfaces. Instead of having a hundred textures, we had 30 or so, over which we'd add dozens of layers of different textures and 'effects maps' per ship to create highlights and other things, and then we'd render them with Renderman. It was

very time-consuming to get the CG models to look right, because the filmmakers have been shooting [the *Trek*] models for a long time, and they knew exactly what type of look they wanted. They would make us revise the models until they were right, which was very difficult."

Insurrection takes place in a region of outer space called the Briar Patch, a giant nebula with immense glowing pillars filled with brilliant red and green areas. Nestled

"I don't think the visual effects will drive this *Star Trek* film. This picture is more about the story's politics than the effects."

**— Blue Sky/VIFX
senior visual effects
supervisor/ president
Richard Hollander**

somewhere within this bizarre phenomena is the planet Ba'ku, where much of the film's action occurs. "The Briar Patch is misty, but with a harder edge, with towering shapes made of gaseous, cloudy material," Grower describes. "You could think of it as a cave the size of our area of the galaxy, although we only occasionally see some red glowy stars embedded in the 'walls,' which are pretty thick, so the distances within it aren't so great that you could see a star field."

The Briar Patch was designed by Santa Barbara Studios' art director, Richard Kriegler, who had previously contributed to Robert Zemeckis's *Contact*. "He's one of the best matte painters in the world," Grower says. "To create the frilly 3-D edges of the Briar Patch 'cheese,' Richard mixed 30 to 40 matte paintings with a volume renderer/shader we developed for Mental Ray. Although some of the matte paintings were multi-plane, he also

used Alias/Wavefront Artisan to paint the ins and outs of his 2-D matte paintings onto 3-D geometry, which would actually deform over the geometry. We call it 2½-D; when we canted or moved around within reason, we'd actually get three-dimensional parallax as the *Enterprise* and other ships traveled through."

One of the first views of the Briar Patch is seen when the Son'a Flagship emerges from a gaseous wall and heads towards the planet Ba'ku. "That was done with particles and software that we wrote called Blender," Grower recalls. "The Briar Patch actually interacts with the Flagship as pieces of it trail off the back. Because everything's CG, the ships and the environment work together."

Although Ba'ku is surrounded by red nebula clouds, the world is somewhat Earthlike in nature. "We couldn't have a weird atmospheric color on the planet's surface, because the filmmakers didn't want any process skies," Grower reveals. Nevertheless, Blue Sky/VIFX was enlisted to digitally art-direct the Ba'ku landscape. "It was supposed to be this mountainous region, so we had to reconstruct a lot of the plates the first unit shot out at Lake Sherwood in Westlake Village, [California]," says Blue Sky/VIFX visual effects supervisor Jim Rygiel, formerly of Boss Film. "We shot snowcapped mountains in Bishop and melded them in with these Lake Sherwood plates. Any time you see mountains on Ba'ku, it's all composite work."

Keeping Blue Sky/VIFX's 220 effects shots on course was the company's senior visual effects supervisor/president Richard Hollander, who counts 1979's *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* among his credits. "I'm the bad guy who looks at how everything's going according to costs, and makes sure that the quality is there," Hollander says with a smile. "On a fairly

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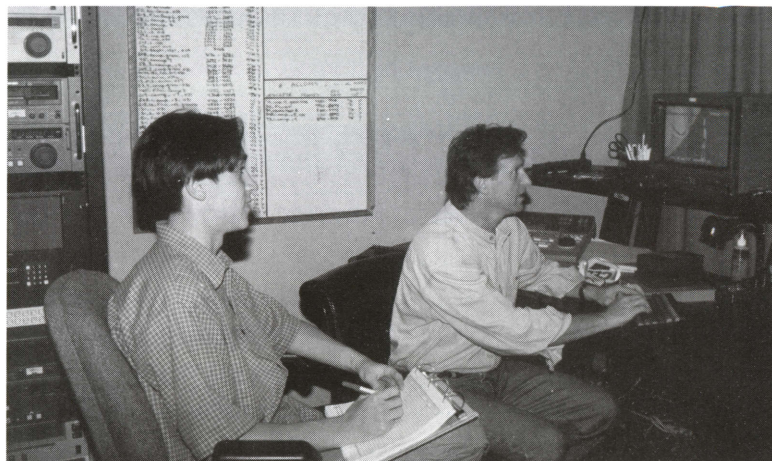
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Effecting an Insurrection

Top right: Santa Barbara Studios executive producer Bruce Jones (right) reviews dailies with technical assistant trainee Randy Modos. Bottom right: Jones confers with lead modeler Eric Saindon while constructing the CG



frequent basis, part of my role has been dealing with Paramount's representatives, director Jonathan Frakes, and producer Rick Berman, and making sure that everybody's happy on both sides."

Meanwhile, Rygiel and visual effects producer John Kilkenny would be on set shooting plates and meeting the new demands that "it can do anything" digital technology places on effects artists — such as changing everything on the fly. "Jim and I were on set every day, helping to design shots so they would work later in the digital world," Kilkenny says. "The film originally started off with about 175 effects shots; now we're well over 200, and many have changed quite a bit since Jim and I came on. For example, we'd be shooting out on location when [director Frakes and the first unit] would imagine a better way of doing something creatively and say, 'Gosh! We'd love to do this!' Jim and I would handle those immediate changes and then disseminate the information to Richard and our artists. My role became overseeing the budgetary and creative concerns of the whole team, and ensuring that we delivered exactly what the client wanted, on time and on budget."

Blue Sky/VIFX also handled one of *Insurrection's* most lyrical passages: an "altered-reality" sequence involving some 17 shots, in which a beautiful Ba'ku woman, Anij, shows

actors. We also added light rays that slowed down, and dust elements and CG leaves in the background."

Besides the waterfall, another visual cue that things are not quite what they seem is an alien bird, a cross between a swallow and a hummingbird, whose wings slow dramatically as the time continuum is halted. The effect was accomplished by Blue Sky/VIFX animators in New York, led by digital animation supervisor Mark Baldo, then composited by the studio artists



Captain Jean-Luc Picard how her people can seemingly bring time to a standstill. "In this altered-reality world, everything slows down and becomes very acute," Rygiel observes.

Part of the slowdown effect was accomplished in-camera while plates were shot on location. An MRMC Milo motion-control system was used with a variable-speed camera that was subtly ramped from 24 to 120 fps during each shot. "We cranked the camera up while shooting some waterfall elements on location, so the water would slow down as it was falling. That was pretty amazing, especially when the camera was moving," Rygiel enthuses. "All of the shots in that sequence are composites, so we shot probably 10 different plates, including a couple of waterfall passes, some flower passes, and the

in Los Angeles. Baldo recounts, "When the hummingbird was moving in real time, the wings were just a blur, so Doug Dooley, who animated the hummingbird, was literally posing them into completely different positions from frame to frame. The hard part was doing the 'slow-motion' animation. In real time, the wings would beat completely in just a few frames, but in slow-motion, they would probably take about five seconds to go from the bottom-most position to the top. We were still only working at 24 fps, but it's the positioning of the wing in each frame that creates that illusion of a super-slow altered reality. In order to make the hummingbird a very iridescent creature, one of our senior technical directors, Dave Walvoord, wrote a special procedure. The hummingbird's feathers looked

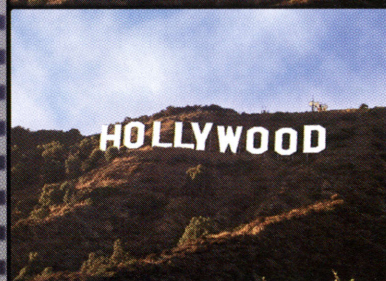
almost black, but whenever the light hit them, the feathers went green."

And with this success came the ability to develop a synergy between Blue Sky/VIFX's East and West Coast divisions. The California-based Rygiel, who oversaw creative teams on both coasts, says "This film enabled our New York and Los Angeles talents to work together for the first time. It wasn't difficult. It was just a matter of phoning, sending videotapes and e-mail images, and keeping the lines of communication open with the director, funneling through me to them."

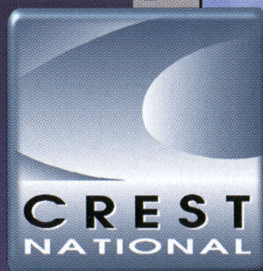
The New York studio of Blue Sky/VIFX was also charged with designing and animating a new alien addition to the *Star Trek* menagerie: the Palm-Pet, which looks like a cross between a baby seal and a hamster and is small enough to fit in a child's hand. As Baldo recalls, the accelerated design phase was quite a challenge: "That was extremely quick. They needed us on set with a maquette two weeks after they gave us the go-ahead. What was so exciting was that there was nothing, not even a cocktail-napkin sketch, to start with, although the script described the creature as a cross between a caterpillar and a jellyfish. Some of the early designs were pretty wild. Everyone who wanted to submitted a design, and it came down to a core group of our modelers and animators, including Mike DeFeo, Sean Cusick, Jim Bresnahan and myself, all drawing and going crazy trying to get ideas. Sean Cusick's sketches ended up being closest to what they had in mind, so that design was selected and refined. We then had our artists start sculpting. The first unit was shooting the scene that introduces the Palm-Pet during our first day on the set, and when I showed Jonathan Frakes the maquette — I'll never forget this as long as I live — he held it in his hands and said, 'What's not to love?'"

While the plates for the Palm-

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Effecting an Insurrection

Pet scene were being shot, Cusick was busy building a CG model of the creature in *Alias*. Senior animator Doug Dooley brought the tiny critter to life in Softimage. Once everything was working to everyone's liking, the Palm-Pet was rendered in CGI Studio, Blue Sky/VIFX's proprietary renderer. "I think they pulled it off pretty well," Rygiel says. "It's something you've never seen, but it had to have the fine detail of a living,

breathing thing. They managed to make it look cute, as opposed to looking like a slug."

Blue Sky/VIFX also handled their share of extraterrestrial craft interiors, including the Son'a Solar Collector and the deceptive Holoship, which is used to trick the Ba'ku people so they can be kidnapped and carried away from the planet en masse. One of Blue Sky/VIFX's more involved sequences

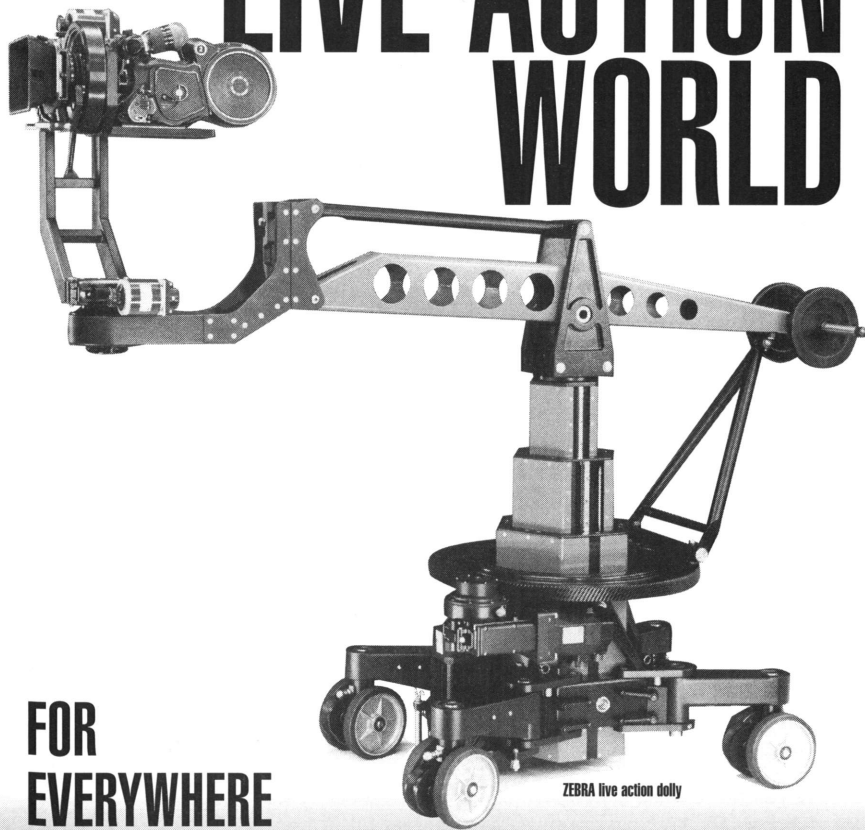
occurs after this elaborate holographic ruse fails and the Son'a launch an attack. Menacing-looking shuttles skim the planet surface, dropping dozens of metallic drones which chase the Ba'ku, firing "tags" into their quarry so they can be instantly beamed off the planet. The shuttles, drones and the tags themselves were entirely CG. "There are hundreds of these little drones flying around firing these tags," describes Richard Hollander. "The drones are about 2' long and look a bit like the Martian war machines from *War of the Worlds*."

The 40-plus effects shots in the sequence feature some 10 drones per cut flying around, hovering and shooting tags. To make the work even more challenging, the scene takes place in broad daylight, where even the most realistic effects can appear less than convincing. "The drone models were heavily detailed," Rygiel explains. "We had some great texture painters who put all kinds of dirt and little markings onto these drones to make them look real. Added to this was a sense of speed, which really sells the illusion."

Just how fast do the drones fly? "They're not that fast," Rygiel admits. "They look a little scary, but the filmmakers didn't want them to look too menacing. They wanted them to be these mindless things that just sweep down and tag people, so we gave them sort of a dive-bombing motion."

Additionally, *Insurrection* boasts some epic space battles courtesy of Santa Barbara Studios, and a zero-gravity phaser fight created by Blue Sky/VIFX. However, these pyrotechnics never obscure the picture's poignant message about colonialism. "I don't think the visual effects will drive this *Star Trek* film," opines Blue Sky/VIFX's Richard Hollander. "This picture is more about the story's politics than the effects — it's going to be a fun *Trek*." ■

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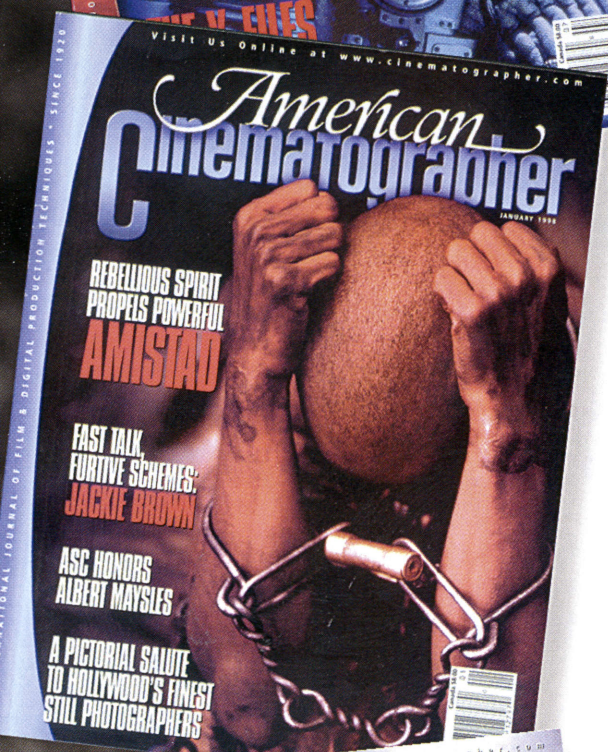
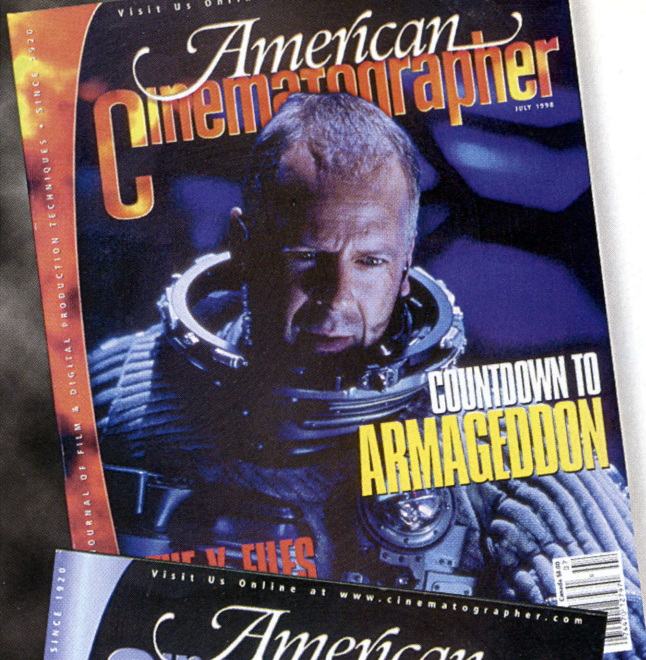
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Scales of Justice

Conrad Hall, ASC reteams with director Steven Zaillian to mount *A Civil Action*.

When veteran director of photography Conrad Hall, ASC paired with first-time director Steven Zaillian on the 1993 film *Searching for Bobby Fischer* (see AC Feb. '94), few imagined that an intimate and touching tale about a child chess prodigy would send reverberations of awe throughout the filmmaking community. After Hall received his seventh Academy Award nomination and earned his second ASC Award for the film, however, cinephiles began waiting eagerly for his second collaboration with Zaillian.

Before writing and directing *Bobby Fischer*, Zaillian was already known in the industry as an accomplished screenwriter, having earned an Academy Award for *Schindler's List* and an Oscar nomination for *Awakenings*. He has also written the films *The Falcon and the Snowman*, *Jack the Bear* and *Clear and Present Danger*.

Zaillian's script for *A Civil Action* was based upon Jonathan Harr's best-selling novel, which tells the true-life story of personal-injury attorney Jan Schlichtmann's efforts to hold the corporate monoliths

by Christopher Probst

Photography by David James

Beatrice Foods and W.R. Grace accountable for the contamination of Woburn, Massachusetts' water supply with the toxin TCE — which led to the leukemia-related deaths of five children and one adult. The film stars John Travolta as the obsessed and sometimes unscrupulous lawyer bent on winning the case. Also among the cast are Robert Duvall (as defense attorney Jerome Facher),

William H. Macy, Dan Hedaya, John Lithgow and Kathleen Quinlan.

Pre-Trial Briefs

A fan of reality-based material, Zaillian was intrigued with the story, and felt that he could enhance its dramatic retelling on the screen. "The book is real life, and like life, it doesn't necessarily lay out in a traditional narrative form," the director submits. "Typically, you expect verdicts to be at the end of the movie, but the really important events in *A Civil Action* actually happen after the verdict. The tone of the film changes at that point. It goes from being fairly traditional — and almost charming in a way — to a much more serious ordeal toward the end. Also, the pace doesn't quicken at the end, it actually slows down for the last third. Most films take their time to get going and then wrap it up with a big finish, but I can't do that with this film. The story doesn't lay out that way. Instead, we see the slow attrition of Travolta's character as he loses everything. I'm always interested in characters who are tested in some way, and set up against a story of importance. Schlichtmann certainly is imperfect. He is someone motivated primarily by money, by the things one accumulates in life, and that is how he defines himself. Ultimately, though, he is willing to be destroyed by what he thinks is right."

Setting out to create yet another legal thriller amid the countless scores of previous judiciary tales posed its own set of challenges for the filmmakers. Zaillian was determined not to create another typical courtroom drama. "It's a very complex story," relates Hall, "and when I read the novel, I didn't see how Steven would be able to create a screenplay out of it. But Steve's script was wonderful. He clarified the story more by combining the two trials into one. Also, instead of making it a standard courtroom drama, he took

the action out into the field, where the lawyers do their investigating."

Hall admits that while formulating a look for the film, he was somewhat thrown by the narrative's circuitous nature, which integrates several flashbacks and various personal recollections into its visual structure. "I always try to get directors to tell me what their vision for the film is," he explains. "On *A Civil Action*, the first time Steve and I got together to discuss the visuals was on a plane flying to Boston to check out the locations. When he asked me how I saw the film, however, I still hadn't gotten a real handle on what I was going to do. There was something about the idea of truth — how light could shadow or reveal truth — which was simmering in my mind. I felt that concept should be

reflected photographically, but I didn't know how it would necessarily come about.

"The film is essentially a tragedy," Hall continues. "It's really about how the lawyers basically lose their case, lose their law firm and fail to prove what they set out to prove — which is that the corporations let out poisons that caused the deaths of the children. [In an emotional sense,] it's not a very bright picture. Since we set the film in Boston during the winter, when the light is more cool and overcast, I began working in the mood of that season, with bare trees and water reflecting white, stark skies."

"Conrad and I discussed the visuals a lot more on *Bobby Fischer* because it was the first time we'd worked together," adds Zaillian.



Opposite: Personal injury lawyer Jan Schlichtmann (John Travolta) engages the court with a plea for justice. Cameraman Conrad Hall, ASC notes, "This film is about truth and cover-up, with white standing for truth and black for the absence of truth." Above, left: The federal courtroom set erected on Stage 29 at Universal. To illuminate the massive interior, Hall aimed 20Ks through the windows and then accented key areas with smaller units. An overall ambience was provided by a 10' x 30' softbox hung overhead. Below: Schlichtmann confronts Judge Walter Skinner (John Lithgow) as his opponent, defense attorney Jerome Facher (Robert Duvall), sits idly by. "We wanted an almost black-and-white feel for the film — very monochromatic and very contrasty," says Hall. "I think we made the courtroom a lot darker than courtrooms normally are."



Scales of Justice

In the film's opening sequence, Schlichtmann is awarded a \$2 million settlement. Shooting this scene in a courtroom location in downtown Los Angeles, Hall had gaffer Randy Woodside and key grip Bill Young built an overhead Kino Flo softbox consisting of eight 4' four-banks — with 3200°K tubes — which they skirted off with black butcher paper and covered with Opal diffusion to provide the room's fluorescent overhead lighting.



"Initially, I had said that of all the movies he'd done, the film that was most akin to *Bobby Fischer* was *Fat City*. That film had a very naturalistic style and an almost documentary look. Of course, I knew that you couldn't just set up a camera and start shooting — it takes very complicated lighting to make a film look that naturalistic — but we used that approach as a base idea going into *Bobby Fischer*. It was by no means what we ended up with. As we got into the shooting, we became a little more stylized and developed what Connie called 'magic naturalism' — images that were naturalistic, but also a bit magical.

"For *A Civil Action*," Zaillian continues, "we used *Bobby Fischer* as a starting place and then let the story and the process of shooting *this* film change that initial visual idea. Neither Connie nor I like bright colors. We both like skin tones to be the most colorful element in the frame. We didn't necessarily want a

monochromatic or pastel feel, but we kept our palette fairly muted. Connie has told me that he comes onto every film not really knowing what he's going to do. Even though he's done so many films, each is like the first one for him, which is part of the excitement. However, that attitude also challenges him to do something unique. Every film has its own set of requirements and problems, and every day is different. What's great about working with Connie is that he won't work on something he doesn't like and respect. He actually cares what the movie is about. His care for the project, in fact, goes far beyond the cinematography. It's the project itself that he cares about."

Hall believes that his all-encompassing approach to film projects is a direct reflection of the way he sees the world. "I'm not like a lighting cameraman, who can light without looking through the camera," he attests. "I cannot light if I can't see the movie that I'm dealing

with. I've always imagined that cinematography is like a writer with a blank, white paper in front of him. Cinematographers have a blank screen that has to be filled with the story. I don't necessarily have one mental checklist of how I approach the lighting on a film, but I do have a frame. And in that frame, you have a subject to deal with that's involved in a story. You have to create visualizations that suit the theme and utilize all of the techniques at your fingertips to enhance the right mood. Being a visualist, I often absorb the environment around me and make mental notes. I don't even do it consciously, but I'm always noting how someone looks in a certain scenario. That impression gets stored away in my mental computer. When you're working on a film, all of your past comes with you, with all of the observations you've stored away; you bring forth the observations that apply to the particular story at hand.



"For me, the use of light is really exciting," Hall expands. "In nature, contrast is what makes light fascinating. So the use of contrast — surprising someone with the amount of difference in those values — is what makes things interesting. When you're driving toward the Grand Canyon, all you can see is an open plain until you suddenly come right up to the edge of it, and then you gasp because of the striking contrast of this thing being so deep. It's the same with brightness and darkness. Contrast can be used to create that same sort of breathtaking sensation of too much or too little. It's a tool to work with in creating mood, but you have to be courageous. And, of course, it's hard to be courageous! It's not like the writer who can just simply rip out a page; it costs a lot of money to put images on film. There's a great responsibility to make sure that everything works, which often keeps you from getting adventurous in the storytelling. You have to struggle with this knowledge that you can't and mustn't fail, but then again, you should always try to do more than just succeed. In telling a story, you should try to be exact in a spectacular way, and that requires courage and a good sense of your craft."

Over the past few years, Hall has been developing what he calls a "highly pointillistic" style of lighting, culminating with his work on *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, in which he employed this technique to its greatest degree. He again utilized this approach for *A Civil Action*. Hall elaborates, "Early in my career, I started to use spotted-down Fresnel lamps for scenes in hallways where it was hard to hide lights. I would put a light 'on the pin' — which means fully spotted-in — and then raise it up behind the camera, shooting it over the heads of the characters in the corridor. I'd then just tip it down so that the hot spot wasn't really hitting anything except the far end of the hallway. The light was at a great

Top: The interior of Boston's historic Athenaeum Library. "The Athenaeum was a particularly difficult location," notes Woodside. "There is only one very small, slow elevator and one stairwell in it. To give Connie the flexibility he needed took a lot of preparation on by of my rigging crew." **Below:** Filming in the Athenaeum. Due to the library's status as a historical landmark, the crew was forbidden from using the walls for rigging. Here, a Senior Chimera lightbank is suspended from a speed-rail arm.

Scales of Justice



Schlichtmann's legal accountant, James Gordon (William H. Macy), rifles through the mail for the scores of credit cards used to fund the Woburn case. The exterior of Schlichtmann's law offices was shot on Charles Street in Boston.

distance, so it wasn't very bright at the end of the hallway, but I could then bring just the edge of the light down to subtly illuminate the heads of the people walking. Since that light was from the camera, the shadows wouldn't be apparent and I'd get this nice falloff on their bodies.

"From there, I started to develop this sort of pointillistic sense of using light by focusing it rather than cutting it. If you hit a wall with a light and then start gradating it by cutting light off certain parts of the wall, you end up with a lot of flags. A light spotted in on the pin is like working with a finer brush, painting a certain area the way you want it to appear with the contrast you want it to have. I can't recall which film this idea started with, but I began using all of my lamps at full focus. Obviously, to create a soft light you don't focus a lamp on a 12' by 12' or 20' by 20' muslin — you fill the muslin completely and then cut the light from there. But if you're using the raw light at full focus, it doesn't create shadows that are so sharp. If the character happens to run into the

light, it creates sort of blurred shadows on the wall. The edge of the light falls off softly, but there's a hot spot in the center. I love to have people walk through too bright an area, for instance. I don't want them to stand there [in the hot spot] and deliver a page and a half of dialogue, but if they pass through something very bright for a moment it creates a good feeling of movement.

"Lighting is so complex that it's hard to quantify," he adds. "It's like playing a piano. How did I do that? What did my fingers do? What made me think about where they should go? I like to equate cinema to music. I'm performing a musical composition when lighting a scene. There are crescendos, allegros and pizzicatos. The visual language is an undulating language, and, like music, it has to have its peaks and valleys. You can't just photograph *everything* beautifully; otherwise, how would you get the gasps if you had nothing but gasps? You can only get a gasp because the audience hasn't been paying attention to anything but the story and the actors.

Then, suddenly, there's something magical that grabs them. Those instances do something to the story and the individual watching, and it's those rhythms [in the visual construction] that are important."

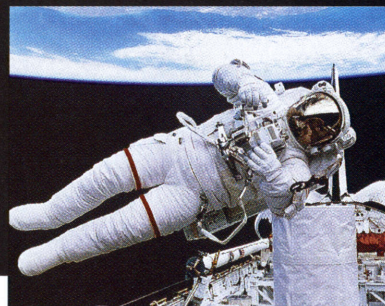
Mounting a Case

A Civil Action was shot with Panavision Platinum cameras and Primo prime lenses set almost exclusively at Hall's preferred T1.9 aperture in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio. The cinematographer used Eastman Kodak EXR 5298 for most interiors and night scenes, as well as EXR 5248 and 5293 for day exteriors and brighter day interiors. The film was shot on location in Boston and various New England locales, as well as on stages in Los Angeles. Principal photography began on stages at Hollywood Center Studios, where production designer David Gropman designed the interior of Schlichtmann's law offices, and then moved to the Universal lot, where an immense federal courtroom set was built, before the production moved to Boston for six weeks of location work.

"The law offices were built on Stage 4 at Hollywood Center," notes gaffer Randy Woodside, who has worked with Hall since *Jennifer 8* (see *AC* Oct. '92). "The set was built on a 10' platform because we had established the real Boston location as being on the second floor with a big bay window, and we wanted to be able to feel the street down below. Initially, we began lighting outside the office, over the courtyard patio, with a 10' by 20' soft box containing multiple 1K nook lights. But we still had a large space [representing the street down below], for which we had to provide some toplight ambience. Also, we wanted to be able to get some hard light into the set from that direction. We asked key grip Bill Young to fly a 20' by 60' light gridcloth that went up to the permanents, and he tied that to the



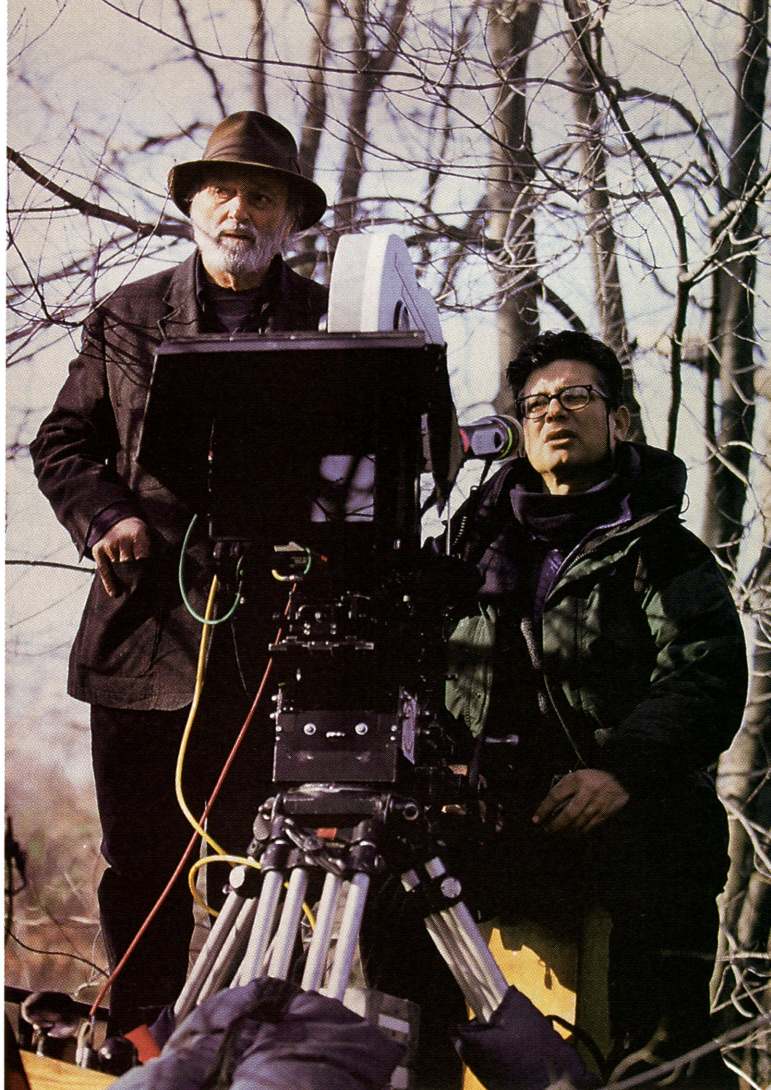
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Hall (on the left) and writer/director Steven Zaillian on location in New England. *A Civil Action* is Zaillian's second collaboration with Hall and the director notes, "Conrad has the skill to make something look great in whatever way he chooses to go about it, but it's who he is as a person and his experiences in life that truly make him great. I'm convinced that no matter what job you do, it's who you are and what you bring with you that defines your work."



handrail on a set of greenbeds across the 'street.' Then, up in the permanents, we used 2K mighties to get as much spread on the gridcloth as we could for our general toplight outside. I then placed four 20Ks on the handrail of the greenbeds, aiming them at the set for our hard light."

"Schlichtmann's office was a beautiful set," comments Hall. "However, I did have the [production design team] change the color of the walls. When we first walked in there, it was a little too warm a shade of beige. To get a little more of the cold feeling of Boston, I had them paint the space a bit more neutral and toward cyan. The set had hard ceilings, so I basically treated it like a real location and lit through the windows with the 20Ks. I like to use big lights to encompass an area as the sun would encompass an area."

"Source lighting is some-

thing that the inventors of cinema brought forth as a technique, and it's a good starting point when you're telling a story, but that doesn't mean you have to follow it," adds Hall. "If I have an interior daylight scene, I usually struggle to use one light coming in through a window. Inside, I use smaller units and practical lights, and I also figure out how to take light away and create the little separations that provide depth. I can use practical lamps a lot as lighting sources, but I will often add to that with additional 'movie' lights. However, you have to make sure that the additional lights you're using on an actor are not also lighting the practical. Finally, I add the proper amount of fill light, which I call room tone, to give the blacks the right tonality. Light bounces off of every surface in a room — the walls, the floor, the furniture — and that's

Scales of Justice

what room tone is. I usually hit a white card above the set or directly on the ceiling so that it doesn't cast shadows on the walls. If you were to turn off all the other lights, you'd barely see anything, but everything would still be visible. There's no directionality to it. Room tone is very important, and you can use varying amounts of it depending on the speed of your film."

Since several major scenes occurred in the law office set, the filmmakers wanted to create several distinct looks, via lighting and a physical representation the firm's decaying assets. Woodside recounts, "I was looking at our 20' by 60' light gridcloth 'sky' one day, and I began thinking about all of the different days that transpire in the film on that set. The gridcloth was hung up there to provide a toplight, but I realized that if we dropped it on the bottom end and let it hang in front of the 20Ks, we could have a 60'-wide source out there — with the 20Ks just the right distance behind it — to provide a large ambient light across the entire set. When we came to a new [narrative] day in the offices and we talked about having a sort of gray quality of light outside, I proposed the idea to Conrad, saying, 'Is this a good time to drop the cloth down and take a look at it? It's quick enough, all we have to do is loosen some ropes and the lights are already in place.' When we lit three 20Ks across it, we suddenly had this beautiful soft light coming from the other end of the set, and it provided an entirely different look. Conrad had the crew bring a large teaser inside the set to cut the light off the back wall and let the light fall off. We really had the natural feel of a gray day outside."

As Zaillian and Hall began to craft the story visually, the duo adopted blocking and composition methods similar to those they'd established on *Bobby Fischer*. "Composition is terribly important,

and such a crucial tool in storytelling,” opines Hall. “You use the frame to communicate the feelings you want to convey in the shot. By centering a character, placing them on a side, or short-siding them, you use the composition to support the moment that counts dramatically. The one moment where the composition makes a dramatic statement is what is important. Otherwise, in a lot of situations, composition isn’t as critical. You don’t necessarily have to have a great composition every second. But when the dramatic import of the scene is crucial, the composition should reflect that and aid the shot in being effective.”

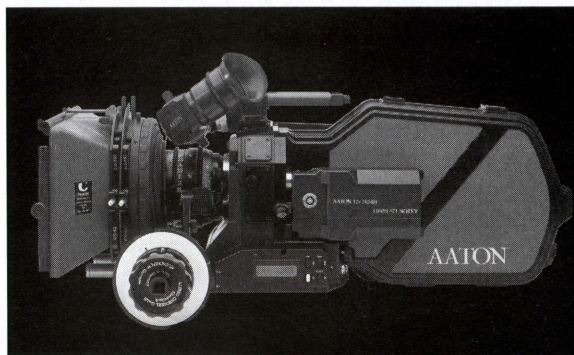
Courtroom Tactics

After completing the scenes in Schlichtmann’s offices, the production moved to the massive Boston federal courtroom set erected within Stage 29 on the Universal lot. The set featured towering 24’-high walls, several equally large windows on the defense team’s side, and a monolithic judge’s bench, echoing the neo-classical style of Third Reich architect Albert Speer. “The courtroom scenes were difficult for me,” Zaillian says. “The set was very big, and because courtrooms have been filmed a thousand times, they always tend to look the same. How do you shoot a judge sitting at the bench in some other way than everybody else has done it? It’s really hard, but I think it’s important to keep things visually interesting. Our set was really good, and that wasn’t an accident. We spent a lot of money on it. We wanted a very imposing, austere design with sandstone and very neutral colors. Travolta’s character had never been in a federal courtroom, so it had to have some scale to make him feel a bit intimidated.”

“Even though the set was large, it was tight inside the courtroom because everything was built right up to the permanents,”

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Scales of Justice

Right: Schlichtmann studies the poisoned land surrounding the troubled town of Woburn, Massachusetts. "The use of water gave us an opportunity for extraordinary symbolism," Hall observes. "Whenever we could, we included water in the shot, whether it was a mother pouring a glass of water at dinner, lawyers drinking water in court, a river, a dripping faucet, or pounding rain." Below: Setting up an over-the-shoulder shot on Travolta as his character seeks evidence on the horrible truth about Woburn.



expands Woodside. "That's actually getting to be more the norm than the exception. The set could very well have been built on [the larger] Stage 12, which would have allowed us some working space to do certain things, but those types of hurdles can be overcome. We had the whole set surrounded by muslin, which was hung on track so that we could move it out of the way when necessary. We then lit the muslin from above and below with 10K cyc lights. Since we had no reference to what the background was supposed to be, we decided to just light a large white background rather than confuse the audience with irrelevant things outside the windows.

"Next, we hung a 20K for each of the large windows on the defense team's side of the set. To create a toplight ambience that we could completely control, we hung a

10' by 30' soft box with 26 1K nook lights inside. The grips then skirted the box and baffled it within into three 10' sections. We could then work each end of it separately. We were trying to keep the foreground faces down, and yet we needed some toplight ambience. There might only be one nook light on at one end and four more on at the other end, but each was also on its own dimmer channel, so we could easily turn one off and look at another. Additionally, we set up a multitude of other lamps, ranging from pepper lights to 20Ks, and worked in Conrad's pointillistic fashion, just nicking the heads of the people in the background or pieces of the blinds, providing a hot spot on the sill.

"If there's, say, a group of pictures on a wall in the shot, Connie will often say, 'Give me dot-dot-dot,'" Woodside continues. "In order to provide separation between the picture frames and the wall, rather than lighting the wall up, we'll take a small unit like a pepper and come around to the most radical rake on the wall so that the light is only hitting the picture frames. That way, you provide vertical highlights on the frames in the background in order to get more separation. Basically, we're playing with reflective angles. We will also do that same technique from the front. If you're in a church on a wide-

angle lens that reveals the whole church and all the pews, you want something on the reflective angle to bring out highlights. Everybody's first instinct is usually to use a backlight to find that reflective angle. However, people seem to forget that 180 degrees to that, there is also the same reflective angle which is coming from the camera. The courtroom in *A Civil Action* had seats that were very much like church pews, so we took a light on the pin and raised it up so that it would just nick the edges. We came in from the front to define those areas against the darker background."

Boston-Bound

After completing the Los Angeles-based portion of filming, the production packed up and moved to Boston for location work that would help sell the film's East Coast setting. Since the story centered on an ecological incident, much of the remaining scenes were exteriors. The filmmakers sought to infuse these sequences with a stark winter ambience, and selected locations near rivers and swamps to reiterate the film's unifying symbol of the water which killed the children.

Zaillian notes that he made a conscious decision to use water as a recurring motif. "That idea occurs at various points in the script, but once we started shooting I found myself sticking a glass of water in every scene. If you look closely, there's a glass in almost every shot, but a lot of times you don't notice it. For the same reason, there's a lot of rain in the movie. If you go too far with a [visual symbol] it can become obnoxious, so we tried to be as subtle as possible. But water is the opening image of the film, and that's what the story is really about — the river, and the drinking water. The sickness and the death in the story is all tied to water."

"I love location work," Hall



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declares. "However, we prayed for overcast weather, but we didn't get much of it. When we could, we tried to stage our days to take advantage of early morning light where the sun still hadn't burned through yet. We tried to shoot as much as we could in those conditions, and then deal with the matching later. Quite often, we also shot into the evening after the sun had gone down, when the meter was not reading anything at all. David Gropman did a beautiful job creating the J.J. Riley Co. [a local tannery where chemicals were spilled] out of an old electrical plant that we'd found. He aged it down to make it look as if it had been built at the end of the Industrial Revolution. Of course, when we went to photograph it, the sun came out. The sunlight took nine-tenths of the aging out of the factory, and made it look more like a modern structure. However, we did try to mute the visuals to reflect the feeling that the lawsuit wasn't going so well.

"I work the high end of the [printing] scale. If 50 is the high end of the scale, I'll be working at 48 or sometimes even over 50, which requires the lab to shift the scale to 60 and then print it back. That removes the contrast, and if you time the print to be cool, it can give the appearance of a less sunny day."

Elaborating on the exterior work, Woodside recalls, "When we did have the good fortune to get some overcast weather, we'd often underexpose the faces and expose more toward the sky, which created some modeling on the faces. I love that technique, because it really provides a more downcast feel. The brow-line shadows the actors' eyes and there's a shadow under their chins. You get more definition in the faces that way. We also used some negative fill to take light away from one side to provide some shape. We were trying to provide a bit of contrast to every shot in a situation that didn't really lend itself to it. On

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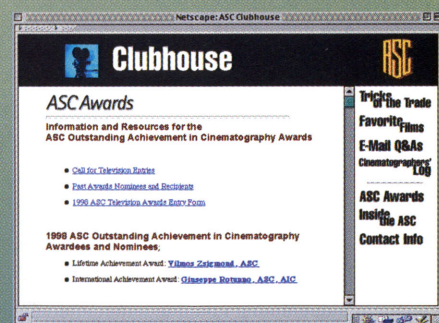
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Scales of Justice

The desolate remnants of Schlichtmann's debt-ridden office. As the firm loses everything in an effort to bring justice to bear, the lighting becomes increasingly bleak.

"The only rule Connie has is that there are no rules," submits Woodside. "There are, however, patterns that we'll use. For instance, we'll often provide a nice half-light on an actor's face and then cut that light off the face right down to the jawline, just to accentuate it.

Conrad uses light to create mood and manipulate emotion, but he also uses it as an element in composition. He's always exploring the limits of what the film can do."



wide shots, we obviously did what we could with the lens aperture, but when we got into coverage, we began shaping the faces by taking light away. When we did add light, we added it in a very subtle, naturalistic way to help get rid of some of the toplight. If you don't do it subtly, things start to get out of balance with everything else in the background. We'd use 18K HMIs through a 12' by 12' — or if it wasn't too windy, a 20' by 20' — with light gridcloth and then place opal or sometimes a heavier diffusion between the lamp and the cloth. We'd then take that a ways back. We always tried to leave some room for everybody to do their job. Unless there was very specific reason to bring the frame up close and maximize the falloff, we'd take the large sources a ways back. At times we'd have two or three 12' by 12's or 20' by 20's lined up to make a large source for light to come across."

The production also utilized several historic locations in Boston which were selected for their rich architectural design and characteristic New England flavor. A key location was the historic Athenaeum Library, one of the oldest and most distinguished independent libraries

in America.

"The Athenaeum was a major location," notes Woodside. "We filmed scenes that took place in [defense lawyer] Jerry Facher's office, during which he's bouncing a tennis ball off the wall while having a conversation with the other defense attorney. We weren't allowed to put any lights outside the windows, though, because the graveyard where Paul Revere is buried was just beyond them. Instead, we had to use lamps that were five times the size that we normally would need, because the light wasn't optimally aimed.

"We also shot on the top floor of the Athenaeum for a scene in which Schlichtmann meets a character named Albert Eustis [Sydney Pollack]. Trying to bring window light into that room was quite a feat. The windows were inset about 25' from the rest of the building, and the street was 115' down. The street was also very narrow, and we couldn't close it off because it was in Boston's historic financial district. Placing a Condor in a normal position wasn't going to work. We contemplated lighting from a building from across the street with a huge array of 18Ks or a

Musco Light, but neither of those options really gave us any flexibility. We wound up using two 138' Condors with articulating arms; each one had an 18K lamp with 1/8 CTO on it. We were extremely lucky to find those units in Boston, but it was a still difficult setup. We had six large windows to light, and we could only park these two units on the street. We had to be selective about their use."

Hall expands, "We were fortunate that there was a building across the way; if we did have a sunny day, we knew the sun would bounce off it and bring light in the windows. We had our lights out there as the light faded or changed, and we could duplicate the light that came in. The Athenaeum's windows were huge, so there was no way to eliminate the bounce from the other window. If it was a gray day, that was one thing; if it was a sunny day, it was another story. But we had the lights to deal with it. There was a lot of light coming in through those windows, but we needed to have some hard light slashing through, so we used 18Ks and 12Ks for that. It's always best to try to get your wide angles first so you'll have something to match to. If you shoot your tight angles first and the light changes, you have to accept whatever it is by the time you get there."

The Verdict

Reflecting upon his experience working with Hall, Zaillian notes, "When I'm writing a script, I cannot help but visualize it in my head. In fact, I can't write it if I can't see it. In a way, I've already directed the film just by writing it. It's then a matter of either trying to capture what I imagined, or being open to another idea that's better. Since *Bobby Fischer* was my first film, I was literally terrified and had planned a lot of it out. I actually sat down and wrote up shot lists and my own little storyboards. I could only get through the first two weeks of shooting,



however, because I was too overwhelmed to think beyond that. Then, when I showed up the first day with all of these storyboards, Connie basically didn't want to have anything to do with them! He just wanted to know what I felt the scene

was about. Even though he had read it, he wanted me to explain to him what I felt. Somehow, while we discussed a scene, we would arrive at some way of shooting it. He taught me not be too set in what I *thought* the scene should look like until after

I had seen a rehearsal. Once I got over the terror of showing up for work without knowing exactly how to shoot something, it was very exciting. We'd make discoveries and find things that never would have occurred to us, which Connie calls 'happy accidents.'

"Conrad always finds a place to sit to watch a rehearsal," Zaillian concludes, "and no matter where he's sitting, his stock line is, 'Well, it looks great from here!'" Basically, that means I can shoot the scene from any side of the room I want — he'll make it look great from that point, or make it look great from the other side if I change my mind. In that way, we work almost like a documentary team. We basically let the event take place — which in this case is a rehearsal of a scripted scene — but we don't impose some preset idea onto it. That was a great lesson for me." ■

Schlichtmann, Facher and W.R. Grace attorney Bill Cheesman (Bruce Norris) bicker at Judge Skinner's bench. With the bulk of lighting provided by 20Ks aimed through the court's windows, Hall chose to accentuate the judge with an additional practical lamp. "It's always important to allow your practicals to work for you," reveals Woodside. "All of the practicals on the set were rigged to dimers and labeled so that everything could be controlled."

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H Street Hassles



In *War Zone*, filmmaker Maggie Hadleigh-West hits Manhattan's sidewalks to confront men about their abusive treatment of female pedestrians.

by Jean Oppenheimer

Photography by Eileen Schreiber

Walking down a busy city sidewalk at midday can be often be an uncomfortable and intimidating experience for a woman, a fact which may surprise some men. But males are rarely subjected to the barrage of catcalls, whistles, crass comments and lewd suggestions that women endure on an almost daily basis.

Filmmaker Maggie Hadleigh-West decided to take the \$10 Super 8 camera she bought at a garage sale and not only document instances of what she calls "street abuse," but also question men about why they engage in behavior she finds both

disrespectful and blatantly aggressive. After making a 13-minute documentary short on the subject in 1992, Hadleigh-West was convinced that the subject merited greater attention, so she set out to make what would become the 76-minute version of *War Zone*. The movie premiered at the Berlin Film Festival (in the Forum of New Cinema), and has played theatrically in New York and Los Angeles.

Hadleigh-West's filmmaking strategy was simple and straightforward: the director walked down various New York City sidewalks carrying a Sony TR-400

Hi-8 camera, a DAT machine, a unilateral microphone and a lavalier. If a man stared at her body or made a suggestive remark as she passed, she would stop, raise the camera and approach him, asking why he had directed such unwanted attention at her. Two other cinematographers recorded the same action using Hi-8 Canon L1s; Eileen Schreiber usually remained a few feet behind Hadleigh-West, while Todd Liebler picked up shots from across the street, ran ahead to catch the action from the front, or got a close-up while Schreiber stayed on a two-shot. Hadleigh-West and cameraman Matt Kohn also shot Super 8 material which was used for the narrative portions of the film.

The Super 8 reversal stocks used for *War Zone* consisted of Eastman Kodak's Tri-X and

Film clips courtesy of Maggie Hadleigh-West.

Ektachrome 160. Though her camera was not crystal-controlled, Hadleigh-West managed to carefully sync the small-format images with her DAT audio recordings. She explains, "I dumped everything to Beta and then cut on an Avid [at a resolution of AVR 77], so whenever I had to sync Super 8 images to the sound, I could slow down the image slightly or speed up the audio very easily. It was very simple."

Interwoven into the film are street interviews, stationary interviews conducted with women across the country, voice-over narration, POV shots filmed by Hadleigh-West, coverage by the other camerapeople, and home movies. A total of 1,050 men were interviewed; 53 of them made the final cut.

Initially, Hadleigh-West had hoped to shoot everything on film. "I was really resistant to Hi-8," she admits. "I love the look of Super 8; it's just so beautiful to me, the graininess and color saturation. But I realized that to conduct interviews with any semblance of continuity I had to shoot Hi-8 as well — Super 8's 3½-minute loads are enough to drive anyone out of their mind! Ultimately, I realized that the two mediums together gave me a kind of timeline that I appreciated."

"Video has the feeling of a color snapshot," she adds. "It can be very garish and ugly, but there is a real immediacy to it. Super 8 often has a quality of looking very old; it could be the 1990s or the Sixties or the Forties. I realized that by conducting the primary interviews in Hi-8 — which gave the feeling of being right there in the moment — and using the Super 8 for the more narrative stuff, [I could create] a sense of the history of street abuse, the feeling that it has been going on for a long time."

Although all of the footage was shot in color, Hadleigh-West always intended to present a good portion of the movie in black-and-

white. After viewing all the footage, she decided that the video material should be monochrome. During post, she drained the color from nearly all of the Hi-8 material, then added a slight sepia tint to it. "I wanted the drama of a black-and-white photograph," she explains. "I think it enhances the grittiness, conceptually, of being on the street. Furthermore, transferring color Hi-8 to film often doesn't work very well, and I wanted the film to be beautiful."

War Zone is only the director's second foray into filmmaking; the shorter 13-minute version of the movie was her first. Born and raised in Fairbanks, Alaska, where her father was a professor of anthropology, Hadleigh-West holds an undergraduate degree in graphic design and a graduate degree in fine art. She says her previous work — sculpting, mixed media and art installations — has always been political, conceptual and photography-based.

Hadleigh-West's background heavily influenced her visual conception of *War Zone*. She explains, "One of the things I often notice, coming as I do from the fine arts world, is that shooters who haven't done still photography tend to catch action and don't look at images frame by frame. To me, it's very important to look at images frame by frame, because I'm interested in formal artistic issues. I don't like things that are centered; I like images that create a kind of tension, and I wanted the audience for *War Zone* to feel that tension."

"Maggie was very clear that she did not want a conventional-looking film," confirms Schreiber, one of the two primary Hi-8 camera operators. "She didn't want center framing, and she didn't want static talking heads. She wanted it to be quirky and interesting, and she said that it was up to us, the shooters, to figure that out. I spent a lot of time



listening to her, trying to feel out who she was and how that was going to be translated into capturing her interactions on the street."

From the beginning, Schreiber saw the film as "Maggie's statement," and viewed her own role as "trying to focus in on things and look for the little details that would express what Maggie sees when she is on the street, which is not necessarily what I see. This is *her* film, so the question



became, 'How can I take what I do and express something she wants to express, without feeling that I have nothing to [contribute to] it?' That's what made my job so exciting."

Above all, Hadleigh-West strove to make viewers feel, as often as possible, the experiences that female pedestrians often confront. Slowing down the action was one way to accomplish this goal. "If you are walking down the street and



Opposite: A male pedestrian attempts to avert the unflinching gaze of Hadleigh-West's camera. A number of men grew angry and violent when confronted with the director's guerrilla tactics. This page, top: A triple exposure shot by Hadleigh-West's grandfather serves as the film's melancholy coda. Middle and bottom: The filmmaker hugs her best friend, Lorenzo Bailey, to whom *War Zone* is dedicated. "Lorenzo is one of the good guys. I see him as a shining symbol of hope," she says. (16mm film clips.)

Street Hassles

Right: Hadleigh-West prepares to shoot in a New Orleans cemetery with cameraman Todd Liebler. Below: At the entrance to a mausoleum, a pair of female interviewees recount their own experiences with men.



someone says something to you, it's very jarring," says the director. "From a viewer's perspective, it's just a very quick incident, but [for the women in question] the moment becomes very elongated, because they don't know what might happen. There's always the threat of physical or sexual violence."

The tactic of slowing down individual incidents injects the film with an almost tangible sense of foreboding. During production, however, Hadleigh-West wasn't sure about how slow she wanted various scenes to be, or even how much slow motion she wanted in the movie. Most of those decisions were made in post, as during editing, she also found that she occasionally needed to stretch the visuals to fit a specific time frame. She notes that Fernando Villena, her last editor and one of her main creative collaborators, was instrumental in helping to decide such matters.

Most of the frame-rate manipulation was accomplished on the Avid Film Composer system. However, to create one montage using Super 8 footage of men's faces, Hadleigh-West simply hand-cranked the film projector during the telecine transfer process to achieve a slow, halting, almost "stuttering" effect. She also manually manipulated the

focus on the video camera lens. "I had no idea what I was doing," she admits with a laugh. "I zoomed in on details of the faces so they were enlarged — that's why the grain is so much bigger — because I wanted to focus on the eyes, on the look, and to show how imposing a look can be. I went as slowly as I could, and when I got to a point that I felt was appropriate, I would stop, hang out, and crank again. The technique was really 'old school,' but it was very effective. Once we had all of those images and put them on the Avid, it was easy to imagine the montage."

One slow-motion effect that was created in-camera is a lengthy shot of Hadleigh-West sitting on an

iron bench, trying to escape the camera's gaze. Although she never physically moves from her position, she repeatedly turns her head from left to right and back again, trying to avoid the camera, which continually shifts its own position to pursue her. Schreiber used a focal length of 10mm to achieve a hypnotic, swooshing, slow-motion effect. "Maggie told me, 'I want the shot to feel claustrophobic,'" recounts Schreiber. "You would normally achieve that by using a long lens to make the frame very tight. But this was the exact opposite; [the sense of] being cornered was more about motion."

Structuring the film was a difficult process. "I didn't have a traditional beginning, middle and end, so I based the arc of the film, literally, on the hierarchy of street abuse," says Hadleigh-West. "I went from incidents that seem totally insignificant to things that are horrific, and then filled out the gray areas in between to create tension. There is an inherent repetition in my film, and that repetition is really important because that's how women experience street abuse. But the repetition changes, and I needed the color and the music to help create the pacing — so there wouldn't ever be a point at which the audience was bored and no longer paying attention



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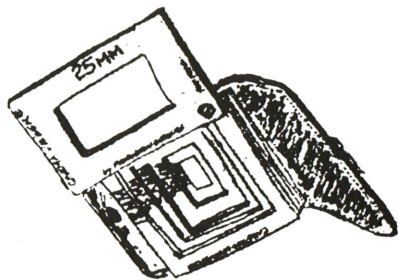
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Street Hassles



This page: Hadleigh-West's questions caused many men to squirm onscreen. Opposite: The filmmaker is ogled yet again.



to the subtle differences that were taking place in the dialogue."

Hadleigh-West didn't want the movie to simply consist of a long series of comments by men, so she spaced out the street interviews, intercutting them with scenes of personal narration and longer interviews she had conducted with women who discussed their experiences with street abuse. She credits editor Kelly Korzan with helping her to find the structure, in which the juxtaposition of color footage and black-and-white helped to create an escalating sense of tension. She and Korzan used a large board as a kind of road map: each character was defined by whether he or she would appear as a color or black-and-white image.

The personal narration sequences — images taken in a variety of locations, with voice-overs by the director or others — include a pinkish, orange-tinged scene (shot on Super 8 by Matt Kohn) of a smiling Hadleigh-West sitting on a bed. The director says that the beautiful coloring resulted from the lighting in the room. Another scene presents a gauntlet of construction workers in a wonderful shade of blue. "It wasn't supposed to be blue," acknowledges Hadleigh-West. "That's the beauty of Super 8; sometimes

you can get beautiful mistakes."

The Hi-8 cinematographers knew going in that their color footage would probably end up as black-and-white. Schreiber factored that into her calculations, trying to set the contrast for black-and-white even though she was shooting on a color medium. "I rode the exposure all the time, and I was constantly changing it as I was moving the camera, adjusting for the light levels," Schreiber reflects. "There was a lot of moving around; we would be shooting into the sun, out of the sun, going in tight on somebody's lips, moving back. Video, like film, is very sensitive to changes in light level, and I was constantly adjusting to make sure the skin tones were the same and that the contrast levels were constant within a scene."

Converting their color footage to black-and-white helped the filmmakers to create an effective ambience. "There's nothing warm and fuzzy about black-and-white," comments Schreiber, who adds that spending eight hours and more a day on the streets was sometimes depressing: "You see all the dirt, all the nastiness, the trash, the crowds, the rich parts of town and the poor parts. And no matter where we were, there were always men checking out Maggie and harassing her."

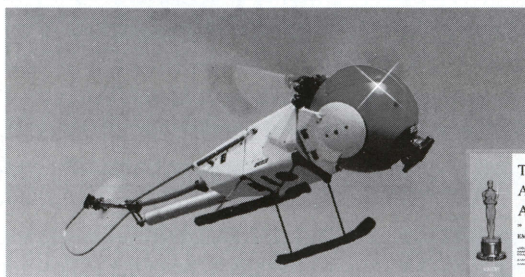
War Zone offers more than just gritty street scenes, however. The film's final image is an eerie, ethereal color shot of a man on a swing with a baby on his lap. As the swing flies toward the camera and then away, the ghostlike image of a woman can be seen standing behind it. "It's a triple exposure, shot by my grandfather many years ago," explains Hadleigh-West. "Apparently he had trouble with his memory. He would forget that he had shot footage, and just film other things over it."



One of the most hypnotic sequences in the film is a traveling shot taken from a boat on a Louisiana swamp, near where Hadleigh-West spent her summers as a child. She had shot the footage many years earlier, before she ever thought of making her movie. The sequence begins with the director sitting on a window sill in New York, reflecting on events in her past. As she talks, the image cuts to the swamp. "I was talking about the places we go personally, [areas of our mind] which can be very dark and scary," she notes. "Metaphorically, I felt the swamp was the perfect place to be, because there is so much life there and everything festers and grows, like fungus. There are things lurking there, but it's very seductive at the same time. Furthermore, I was telling a story about something that happened to me in Louisiana when I was 21, [an incident] which profoundly affected my perceptions."

That incident in question occurred in a small town, where Hadleigh-West was threatened at gunpoint by a man in a passing car; she was spared when another car appeared and frightened off her would-be assailant. This experience opens an important window into the filmmaker's thoughts and feelings about street abuse and the ever-present danger of physical or sexual violence which it portends. While many people draw a distinction between a man uttering verbal remarks and merely looking at a woman's body as he passes her, Hadleigh-West sees little difference: "Men who look at my ass or breasts, make comments or make kissing

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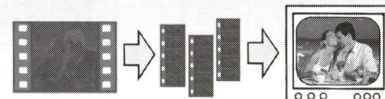
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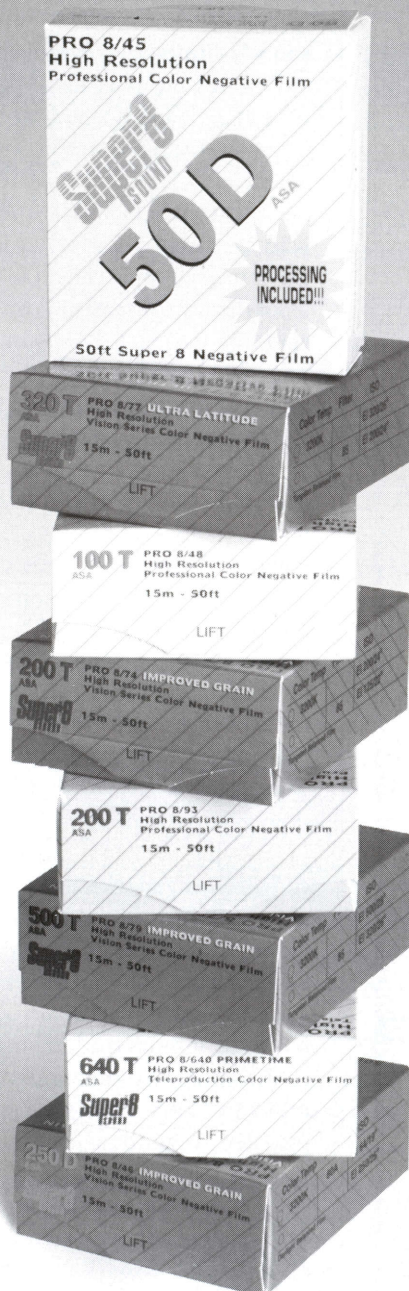
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Street Hassles

noises cause me to feel creepy and self-conscious. It's still sexual."

Hadleigh-West admits that when she started her documentary project six years ago, she would launch into a lecture on the matter when interviewing her male subjects. She recalls, "I was a proselytizer. It was boring, didactic and really unproductive. I learned to keep my mouth shut."

Another valuable lesson she picked up while making the film was to let the men speak, rather than chopping their comments into short sound bites. "Previously, I annihilated the men in a way," she describes. "I cut them into sound bites so they weren't interesting characters. They said what they needed to say, but I lost the essence of who they were. I learned to just let them speak. People recognize that a lot of them are regular nice guys who could be their father or brother or boyfriend, which brings [the film's message] closer to home and makes it even more disturbing."

She always tried to approach her subjects in a non-threatening manner, aware that a camera can make anybody a little defensive. In general, few of the men noticed her camera when she passed. "They were looking at my breasts or ass," she points out, "and I wasn't walking with the camera up. Men's experience isn't that women turn cameras on them when they harass them, so there is no expectation of that."

While many men were embarrassed and several tried to run away, a disturbing number became violent, chasing her and/or physically assaulting her. Some 30 men tried to grab the microphone out of her hand; six or seven tried to knock the camera away. One man smashed the camera into her head, while another punched her in the side of the head with his fists. "When I am by myself and I experience street abuse, I don't feel calm," she remarks. "I feel anxious, angry and frustrated. But when I was

doing the film, I had a camera in my hand and I was gathering information, so these people were no longer my antagonists. It was actually very easy for me to flip-flop my feelings and ask them, 'Do you mind if I interview you?'"

Getting footage of the actual act of harassment wasn't easy, however, since it was nearly impossible to anticipate who might make a lecherous gesture or remark. "The hardest thing to do is to get the actual gestures," concurs Hi-8 cameraman Todd Liebler. On more than one occasion he was positioned across the street, shooting tight as Hadleigh-West walked down the opposite sidewalk past men sitting on a stoop. "I would focus on the men [in close-up] as Maggie walked through frame. Eileen, who was a few feet behind her, would cover her wide. I'd see the men in relative close-up from across the street, and I could see them mouthing the words. I'd be dead on these guys."

Liebler and Schreiber devised a plan for covering the action: one of them would always be wide and the other tight. As soon as Hadleigh-West turned on her camera and moved in on a man, however, the two operators would also move in. The action that each covered was based on where they were standing. According to Schreiber, the responsibilities changed constantly; she and Liebler relied upon eye signals.

Hadleigh-West notes that she wanted at least one of her camera operators to be female. "It was important to me to have a female shooter, because street abuse is so subtle. It's the kind of thing men aren't particularly familiar with, so I wanted another woman's perspective. She would be able to see it more readily than a man." As it turned out, men on the street also frequently harassed Schreiber.

The most harrowing passage in *War Zone* — and, ironically but very intentionally, one of the most

visually beautiful — is a sequence during which the viewer listens to the voice of a terror-stricken woman making a 911 phone call as a man breaks into her house and rapes her.

The call is real, but the viewer never sees the woman. Instead, the scene opens on a street during a thunderstorm; rain pours down as people scurry to find shelter. The only sound is the rain and thunder. As the 911 call comes in, the camera tilts so that only the surface of the street can be seen. A bright, flashing red light is reflected on the wet pavement. "The [blinking] light on the ground represents the beating of the woman's heart as she goes through this terrifying experience," says Hadleigh-West. "And then, when she utters a bloodcurdling scream, the light is gone, as if her life has been extinguished."

The image was achieved by superimposing two separate versions of the same shot: a black-and-white Hi-8 view of the street and a corresponding color rendition. "I wanted the drama of black-and-white, but we also wanted that burst of color," continues Hadleigh-West. "Luckily, the scene we took of the light blinking over and over again was very gray. We laid one image over the other on the Avid, placing the color image in the background and the black-and-white image on top of it, and just let the color seep through."

Even in its most subtle forms, street abuse can be an unnerving experience for a woman. The problem has received scant attention in the media, and Hadleigh-West hopes that her film will help to raise awareness. She has been heartened by the reaction from men who have seen her film. "I don't think the majority of men realize the climate of aggression that women live in," she offers. "They don't really want to make us feel bad about ourselves or to feel unsafe. They have just never had to think about it." ■

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Tracing a Filmmaker's Footsteps

In Search of Kundun With Martin Scorsese tracks the director and his production team during the creation of a sweeping biopic about the Dalai Lama.

by Debra Kaufman

Photography by Mario Tursi



A personal relationship between director Martin Scorsese and Michael Henry Wilson led to the latter filmmaker's intriguing new documentary, *In Search of Kundun With Martin Scorsese*. The Los Angeles-area writer/director/producer had just finished the three-

part *A Personal Journey With Martin Scorsese*, a celebration of 100 years of American cinema which he co-wrote and co-directed with Scorsese. Prior to that project, Wilson had written and directed the Scorsese episode of *A Day in the Life of the Cinema* from the French TV network Canal+.

Several months after *A Personal Journey*, Scorsese told Wilson about *Kundun*, his upcoming film on the life of the Dalai Lama (see full coverage in *AC* Feb. '98). The two decided it would be natural for Wilson to document the production. However, neither Wilson nor producer Dale Ann Stieber (who had also produced on *A Personal Journey*) anticipated how the story of the Dalai Lama, the film's milieu of Tibetan spirituality and the real-life stories of *Kundun*'s non-professional native cast would impact them personally. "The most rewarding part of the experience, for me, was to discover and experience the beauty of this vanished world of Tibetan culture, which is being destroyed and cannot be revived," says Wilson. "That was absolutely unique, and I could not have experienced it had I not made this documentary."

Relationships were also behind the movie's financing. When no advance funding was forthcoming in the U.S., the French-born, bicultural Wilson turned to two independent Gallic producers from Comagnie Panoptique, T. Celal and Jean Labib, who found funding with Canal+, thereby turning *In Search of Kundun* into a French/American co-production. With this government funding came the caveat that a portion of the production and post had to take place in France.

The film's two directors of

photography — Jean-Jacques Flori (who supervised the first two shoots in Morocco before succumbing to a terminal illness) and Frederic Vassort (Flori's replacement) — were French, but the project's editor (Rick Blue), composer (Ken Lauber) and production coordinator in India (Vanessa Hedwig Smith) were all American. Offline editorial and sound mixing were done in the United States (at Ventana), but online editing and titling were completed in France (at Sylicon) and the tape-to-film transfer was handled in Switzerland (at Swiss Effects). "It was a uniquely complicated situation, but everything worked quite smoothly," notes Stieber. "With a co-production, as soon as you recognize and respect somebody else's contribution, you can embrace it as an opportunity."

During the project's formative stages, Wilson and Stieber took advantage of just such an opportunity, jetting off to Paris to interview several cinematographers assembled by Compagnie Panoptique. "It was like casting," says Wilson. "We had to find someone who had international experience, and both Flori and Vassort fit that profile. Each of them had filmed wars, riots and demonstrations, so they knew how to work in difficult situations."

Wilson was particularly familiar with Flori, "a legendary figure in French cinematography" whose resumé includes such key independent films of the '60s and '70s as *Le Journal d'un Suicide*, *Une Nouvelle Aventure de Billy le Kid*, *Love*, *Le Soldat et les Trois Soeurs*, *La Chanson de Roland*, *Tusk* and *La Lumière des Etoiles Mortes*. For Wilson, the role of the cinematographer would be particularly crucial to this particular documentary, which he intended to be much more intimate than a typical "behind the scenes" film. "Crews are used to the pre-formatted 'making-of' films that studios do," explains Wilson. "They

have a crew that comes in for a day at most, and the questions are already approved by publicity. This was a different animal."

For Wilson, the goal was to follow Scorsese and director of photography Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC as closely as possible throughout selected portions of the entire filmmaking process. "Ideally, you want to be a fly on the wall; at the same time, you have to be in their faces," he says. "We didn't want to do what most making-of crews do, where they're told to wait on the periphery of the set and not move in. Had we done that, we would have

"At first, I thought we would mainly be documenting Marty's personal experiences, but four or five days into our shoot, Marty and I had a discussion. He said, 'Go and ask the Tibetans to tell you their stories. We need to capture that.'"

— documentarian
Michael H. Wilson

missed a lot. There's a lot of diplomacy involved, because there is protocol. You need a very sensitive cinematographer, and Flori and Vassort both had that quality."

The documentary had a less-than-auspicious beginning when Scorsese began filming *Kundun* while the *In Search Of* lawyers were still drawing up the paperwork. Wilson realized that if he waited for the financing to come together, he would miss the beginning of the film. He decided to fly to Morocco for what would be the first of four trips during the nearly four-month *Kundun* production. Upon arrival, Wilson sought to hire a Moroccan crew for

the first four days of the shoot. He was able to find experienced technicians on short notice with the help of Asa Productions, a Moroccan firm that also organized government permits, transportation and other location-related tasks for the documentary crew.

Asa's production manager, Khadija Alami, found cameraman Gilles Benchetrit and sound man Ali Farraoui, who captured a few scenes at the beginning of the *Kundun* shoot on Betacam SP. "We didn't have a digital camera for those first four days of the shoot, and you can notice the different texture," Wilson admits. "But we were able to capture Marty and the two-year-old child actors — it was the only section of the film with them in it — and Marty with some horses, doing his 'Eastern' epic. Otherwise, we would have missed those moments."

In preproduction, Wilson decided to go with video — specifically, PAL Digital Betacam — rather than 16mm film, for a variety of reasons. "I think we needed the flexibility of video," he says. "I cannot stress how difficult it is for a crew doing a film about a film to move around a set and not antagonize the people making the feature. I think the fact that we were shooting video also gave us an identity very separate from that of the film crew."

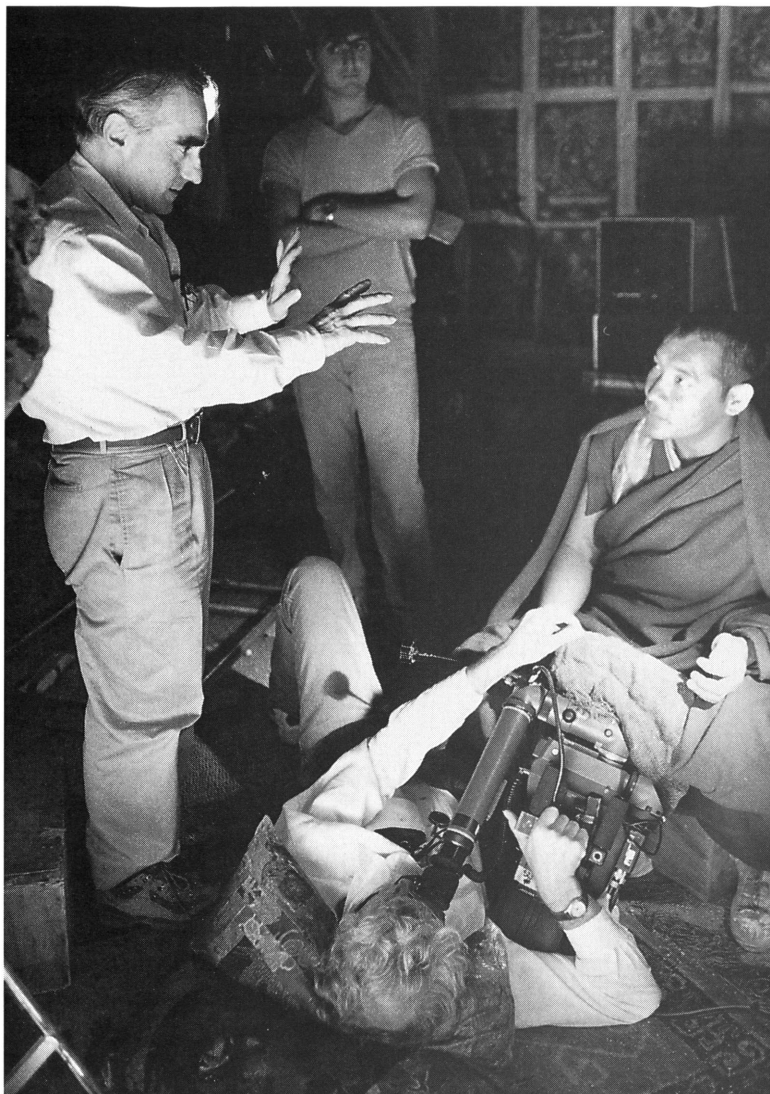
Never having utilized Digital Betacam before, Wilson screened documentaries shot in the format and says he was "very impressed with the quality, the clarity of the image. It's obvious to me: if you can afford it, that's the format you want. I see only pros, no cons."

Stieber also notes that the filmmakers were heartened by the vast improvements they noticed while examining recent tape-to-film transfers done in the U.S. and Europe, which assured them that their end product could be transferred to film at high quality. "You want the flexibility to collect as

Martin Scorsese directs a cast of Tibetan advisors and extras on one of the highly authentic sets built by production designer Dante Ferretti.

Tracing a Filmmaker's Footsteps

Scorsese prepares Geshi Yeshe Gyatso (as the Lama of Sera) while cinematographer Roger Deakins works out his angle.



much information as possible, and tape is simply the most affordable way to do that," notes Stieber. "The Digital Betacam format allowed us to achieve both quality and quantity. The PAL standard — without knocking NTSC — was the icing on the cake. We didn't have to deal with 3:2 pulldown, and the color process was better."

In addition to a Sony Digital Betacam camera, the production also took along a Sony DVX-1000 DV-format camera as backup. "We were only on the set a week or so at a time," Stieber points out. "The thought of losing even a day of shooting evoked panic. Our insurance policy was this small camera."

The "insurance policy" seemed even more important when Stieber was dismayed to learn that there are five words in Moroccan Arabic for "dust." Fortunately, the filmmakers never encountered enough dust or other harsh elements to knock the Digital Betacam camera out of commission.

The Sony DVX-1000 camera proved quite useful for the film's intimate scenes in very tight interior sets, such as a tent where the young Dalai Lama runs under a monk's robes. "That was as tight a set as you could imagine, and it was pretty dark as well," recounts Wilson. "Sometimes Roger [Deakins] was on the edge of darkness. I had to go with whatever

lighting Roger had put up. There was no way we could make changes or add lighting. That's where it was really good to have the Sony DVX-1000, because it's not cumbersome and it's easy to operate in very tight settings, even with very little light. I was very impressed with how the DVX-1000 held up in low-light conditions."

When the set was so cramped that only one person from the documentary crew could go in, Wilson occasionally shouldered the camera himself. "The DVX-1000 gave us so much freedom," he enthuses. "You don't have to think about the camera, just the situation you're filming — which was so refreshing. I'm not a cinematographer, but there were moments when I had to handle the camera. Even a total non-professional can handle that camera and focus on what he's filming, rather than worrying about the camera itself."

Another unique twist in the production was the Canal+ requirement that the documentary be shot in 1.77:1, an aspect ratio Wilson says he "immediately fell in love with. It's a nice-sized canvas, especially when you're shooting in a place like Morocco, where you've got a lot of space around your characters. Also, 1.77 has a nice, painterly quality that 1.33 may not have. It's not quite the widest format, but it's a nice compromise. People [in the U.S.] haven't been exposed to it, but I'm hoping the format will make an impact in this country."

The budget didn't allow the documentary crew to stay in Morocco for the duration of the *Kundun* shoot, so Wilson had to choose his moments carefully. By reading the script, he zeroed in on key points in the story that would need to be highlighted in the documentary — particularly scenes with the Dalai Lama as a two-year-old, a six-year-old and a young adult, including his confrontation with

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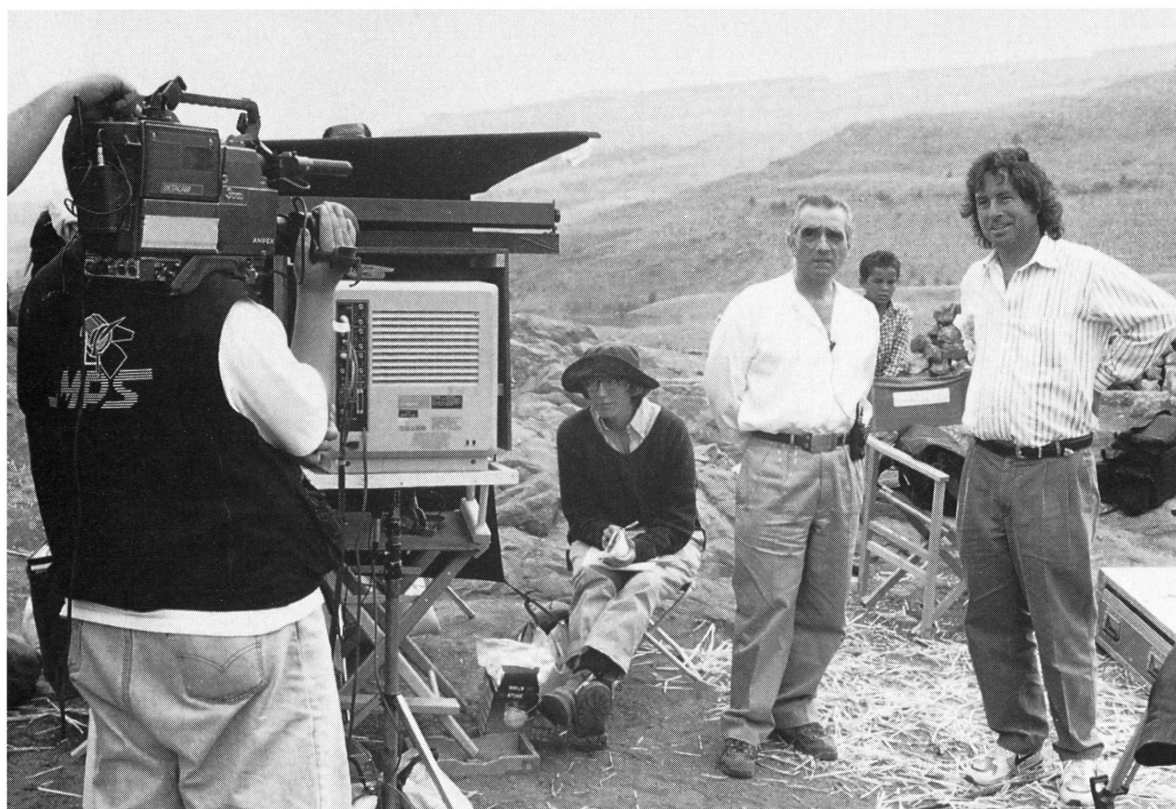
Scorsese and director Michael H. Wilson confer as the documentary crew lines up a shot in Morocco.

Mao Tse-tung. After Scorsese sent Wilson his shooting script, the documentarian broke it down into three periods, later adding a fourth (a re-creation of a Tibetan opera) when Scorsese urged Wilson to cover it. "The opera was easy to miss, because it was only one-third of a page on the script," explains Wilson. "But Marty had seen the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts perform some [of the opera] in Dharamsala [India], so

hastily hired Moroccan crew arrived, the shoot had moved outdoors, to a courtyard at the farmhouse setting where much of the early scenes take place. Wilson reports that everyone on Scorsese's team was in good spirits. "Marty had been nervous about how non-professional actors would handle the shoot, but by the time we arrived, he and his crew had realized that the Tibetans would be wonderful collaborators," he

played a major role in his creative process. It was amazing to see how open he was to their feelings and their input. After that first week, I realized that there was a Tibetan drama I could not ignore. It couldn't be just a portrait of the artist at work. The Tibetan stories needed to be heard."

Wilson began focusing on that part of the documentary during the second shoot, which took place three



he knew it would be spectacular, and he knew how important it was in Tibetan culture."

The *Kundun* script was shot chronologically, since the film's "actors" were, in fact, Tibetans with no professional acting experience. To help ease them into the filmmaking process, Scorsese told Wilson not to shoot the opening scene. He didn't want the inexperienced actors to be overwhelmed by two cameras, and he wanted them to learn to relate to his crew and camera.

By the time Wilson and his

remembers. "Marty was having a great time."

By the end of the first shoot, something else had occurred that would completely change the direction of the film. "At first, I thought we would mainly be documenting Marty's personal experiences," observes Wilson. "But four or five days into our shoot, Marty and I had a discussion. He said, 'Go and ask the Tibetans to tell you their stories. We need to capture that.' Marty himself was extremely touched by the Tibetans, and it

weeks after the first, when the *Kundun* crew was scheduled to photograph the Tibetan opera. Stieber says that he and his team had anticipated a Western, proscenium-style performance, and were surprised by the nature of a Tibetan opera — wild dancing and satirical clowning over a large, outdoor space surrounded by spectators. For the 300 Tibetans who were part of the film, the minutely detailed re-creation of the opera was a poignant reminder of their lost homeland and a deeply emotional event.

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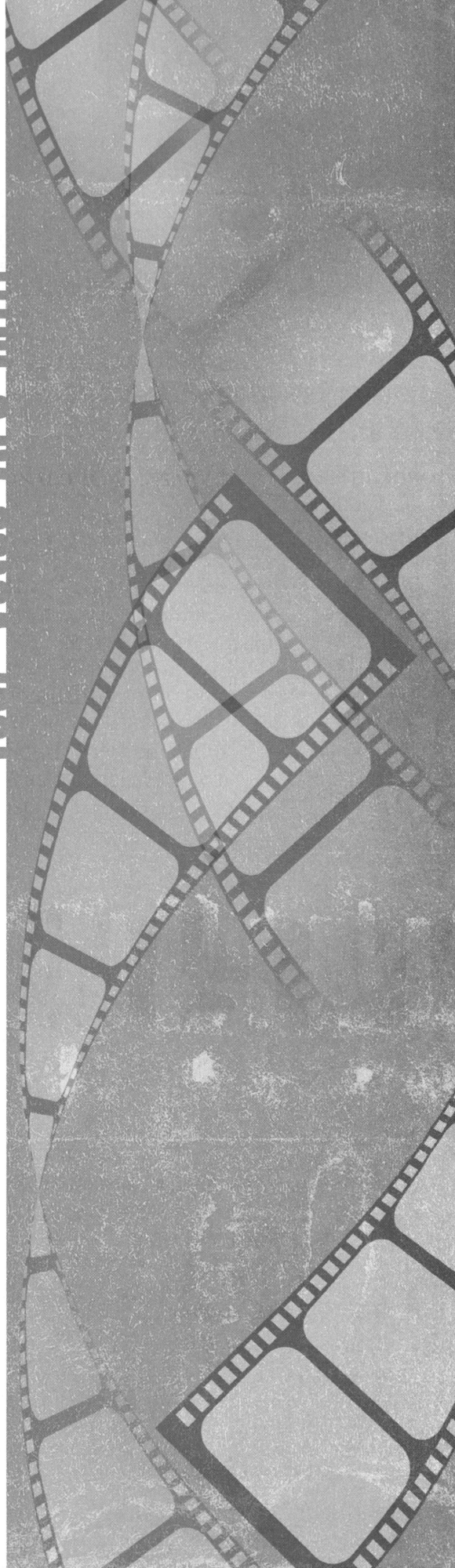
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Tracing a Filmmaker's Footsteps

The opera — which went on for many days — was also a prime opportunity for Wilson to capture the Tibetans' stories, in interviews that eventually became the emotional core of the documentary. "I was interested in having them relate to the culture in the scene in which they were being filmed — not as actors but as Tibetans," he says. "During practically every interview I did, the interviewee, at one point or another, would start crying and we'd stop filming. It's hard for us to comprehend what it's like to come from a country where the culture has been systematically destroyed.

"I kept going back to the [Tibetan] advisors, because they were such a great resource," Wilson continues. "Lobsang Lhalungpa, for example, talked about your enemies being your No. 1 teacher, and about us being keepers of the earth, not its owners. He made some of the

documentary's most important statements."

The documentarians' third trip was to Casablanca, where the scenes of the Dalai Lama's Beijing meeting with Mao Tse-tung were filmed. The fourth and final shoot took place on rough terrain in a village high in the Atlas Mountains, from which the Dalai Lama escapes to India. In this primitive place, the locals had never seen a film crew, the roads were all dirt, and transportation of everything and everyone was accomplished by mule, including all of the camera and lighting equipment.

An unexpected opportunity arose after Wilson's last trip to Morocco, when he got permission to photograph an audience with the Dalai Lama at his headquarters-in-exile in Dharamsala, India. There, the Sony DVX-1000 camera played another crucial role. "That scene wasn't originally part of the plan, so

I had to add it in for very little money, which meant bringing only the DV camera and not the French crew or [producer] Dale [Stieber]," relates Wilson.

Because the small DV-format camera looked just like a non-professional tourist camera, Wilson was able to bypass onerous and time-consuming Indian customs inspections. The fact that he would be interviewing the Dalai Lama for a documentary about Tibet would have set off the same alarms that had prevented *Kundun* from shooting in that country, so Wilson knew that playing things low-key was the best way to go.

While in India, production coordinator/historical consultant Vanessa Hedwig Smith hooked Wilson up with cameraman Devlin Bose (who had worked with celebrated Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray) and sound man Manu Goyal.

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After being led into the audience room, the crew had 30 minutes to set up the shoot. Wilson had scripted questions that related to the scenes shot in Morocco, but all of the planning didn't prepare him for meeting the Dalai Lama in person. "When you're face to face with him, you see that he has all of these facets," reveals Wilson. "He's something of a Churchill, because he's a political leader, but he's also a 10-year-old child, constantly laughing, very physical. At the same time, he's totally transparent. He's a very complex person."

Known for his interest in all things technical, the Dalai Lama closely examined the DV camera, suggested an impromptu photo session, and watched the filmmakers pack up their gear.

The postproduction process was assisted by *Kundun* editor Thelma Schoonmaker, who was the

documentary's editorial consultant. Schoonmaker had also served as Wilson's editor on *A Personal Journey With Martin Scorsese*, and he says she provided invaluable advice and suggestions. "Thelma is like a godmother for me," Wilson says. "Thelma says a documentary is more difficult to edit than a feature film, because you find the story in the editing — as opposed to to a feature, where you have a script to rely on. She compares [documentary editing] to a mystery, and I've always loved that concept."

That mystery was what drove Wilson to search out the story behind the making of *Kundun*. "It's not enough to capture even the greatest filmmaker at work," says Wilson. "Your key question has to be, 'What is that going to tell you? How will you present this as an interesting emotional experience?' You cannot censor yourself on the set, even when

what's going on seems boring. Later, in the cutting room, you'll see a great expression or something interesting.

"You need to find a thread," he concludes. "In that regard, I was fortunate on this project, because there was much more happening than just the filmmaking process."

Since *In Search of Kundun With Martin Scorsese* was conceived as a companion piece to *Kundun*, Wilson hopes that in the future, the two films will be shown together. In France, where the documentary has already been given a theatrical release, there has been talk of doing just that. "You can experience the Dalai Lama telling you, in his own words, about what these events [depicted in *Kundun*] have meant to him; that is what we have done," says Wilson. "I hope our film casts an interesting light on Marty's picture and gives it even more resonance." ■

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Space Cadets

The amiable and entertaining documentary *Trekkies* offers a fond Vulcan salute to a certain sci-fi show's most passionate fans.

by Naomi Pfefferman

How do you make a documentary with virtually no money, then sell it to Paramount Pictures for \$1.25 million, an almost unheard-of sum? Ask *Trekkies* director/editor Roger Nygard and cinematographer Harris Done, who have boldly gone where few filmmakers have gone before.

Trekkies is an affectionate look at the devotees of the *Star Trek* television series and its various incarnations. The titular cult is the only fan group listed by name in the Oxford English Dictionary, and one of the largest phenomena in pop-culture history. Every day, somewhere in the world, millions of people are watching *Star Trek*.

In this genial documentary, executive producer and host Denise Crosby (who played Lieutenant Tasha Yar on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) takes the audience on a tour of the Trekkie galaxy: the conventions, the costumes, the fan clubs, the fanzine writers, even the "slash" writers who have penned "adult" *Trek*-themed publications



featuring homoerotic liaisons between Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock.

Along the way, we meet Barbara Adams, the Whitewater juror who arrived in court wearing her Starfleet commanding-officer uniform, communicator badge, rank pips, phaser and tricorder. We also visit an Orlando, Florida dentist whose office, Starbase Dental, is crammed with Trek treasures; a 14-year-old from Bakersfield who has already attended 28 conventions; and a man who admits, despite his wife's vehement protests, that he would like to have his ears surgically altered to resemble Vulcan points.

Viewers also tour a 31' replica of the starship *Enterprise* at the entrance of the city of Vulcan, in Alberta, Canada; a Klingon language class at the Interstellar Language School in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota; and a *Trek*-themed parade in Riverside, Iowa (population 826), which touts itself as the future birthplace of Captain James T. Kirk.

Although these highlights could easily be satirized with sarcastic humor, the filmmakers sought to avoid turning *Trekkies* into a "mockumentary." Says Nygard, "Going into the movie, my expectations of the fans were influenced by the popular stereotype: that Trekkies are losers. It was a refreshing surprise to discover that the fans are so upbeat and positive. I mean, they *are* obsessed with their pastime, but there are worse things to be obsessed with than improving the future of mankind, which is what the fans really take from *Star Trek*."

The 36-year-old Nygard, who lives in Santa Monica, California, admits that he is not a Trekkie, although he enjoyed watching the series, along with *Land of the Giants* and *Time Tunnel*, when he was a kid. His true obsession is filmmaking. While growing up in Long Lake, Minnesota, Nygard appropriated his father's Super 8 camera and began directing his three younger siblings



in amateur action flicks. With a hearty laugh, he recalls that the special effects in these epics consisted of throwing homemade dummies off the roof. Nygard also spent a lot of time watching suspense thrillers and science-fiction films (he can tell you, for example, that *Godzilla vs. the Smog Monster* is worth seeing just for the disco scenes).

While attending the University of Minnesota, Nygard saved about \$10,000 in student loans by living at his grandmother's house near campus. Ultimately, he used the money to help finance his first film, a horror comedy entitled *Warped*, which won the top award at the 1990 Houston International Film Festival.



Nygard went on to direct the HBO premiere *Back to Back* and the 1991 low-budget action/comedy *High Strung*, which starred Steve Oedekerk and featured an unbilled Jim Carrey.

High Strung also featured an actress named Denise Crosby, who had just completed her first season on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Crosby kept telling Nygard about the Trekkies who had overwhelmed and amazed her at assorted conventions. She and Nygard agreed that the fans would make a terrific documentary subject; when producer Keith Border and his company Neo Art & Logic agreed to finance the endeavor in the summer of 1996, they were off and running.

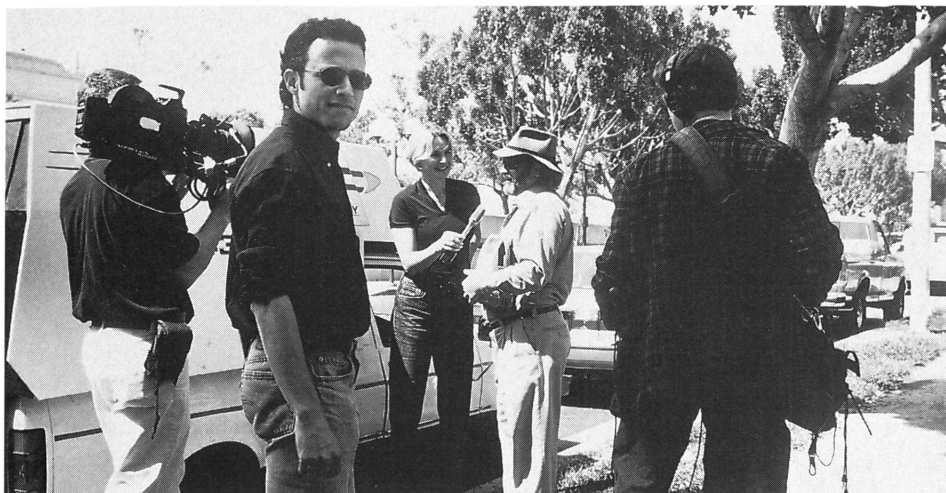
The filmmakers started by contacting Richard Arnold, Gene Roddenberry's former assistant and head researcher, to get as much information as possible on the movement. "We then began our list of famous Trekkies to track down," says the director, who also prepared by watching a dozen classic documentaries, including Michael Apted's *35 Up*, the Maysles brothers' *Salesman*, and Les Blank's *Gap-Toothed Women*.

In plotting out a visual style for *Trekkies*, Nygard decided on "a cross between MTV and the Maysles brothers." He wanted the playful, energetic, handheld, always-roving camera work of MTV shows like *The Real World*, plus the intuitive portraiture of the famed cinema verité filmmakers. "I really like point-of-view shots," adds Nygard, who first needed to find a cinematographer willing to work for free up front.

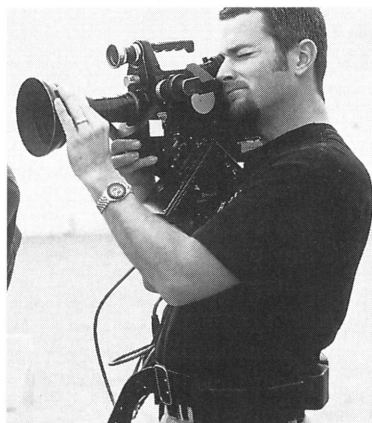
Enter Harris Done, 35, who had shot second unit on *Back to Back*, impressing Nygard and Border with some vibrant documentary footage of the New York Stock Exchange. "I was the guy with the free camera," quips Done, who has also contributed second-unit work to such films as *Casper* and *The*

Opposite: J. Trusk, a hardcore Trekkie and "Captain Kirk" lookalike. Left: Costumed *Trek* fans flock to a convention in Pasadena, California. Bottom: Trekkies executive producer/host Denise Crosby — a former cast member of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* — holds a needlepoint likeness of her character, Lt. Tasha Yar, given to her by a fan.

Space Cadets



Above: Director Roger Nygard (facing camera) and his production team work with Crosby to get an interview on the street. Right: Nygard and cinematographer Harris Done face off with the Eclair NPR used to shoot most of *Trekies*.



Cable Guy. Conveniently enough, he even lives a block away from Nygard in Santa Monica.

Having served as director of photography on nearly 20 indie films (including *Ocean Tribe*, see coverage of L.A. Independent Film Festival in AC June 1997), Done knows something about making movies on the cheap. For his directorial debut, an award-winning thriller called *Sand Trap*, he created "moonlight" for desert night scenes by covering car headlights with colored gels.

For *Trekies*, Done used his Eclair NPR 16mm camera, which he had bought for \$5,000 after graduating from USC's film school, and three 400' magazines. "The Eclair was one of the workhorse documentary cameras of the late 1960s and 1970s," explains the cinematographer. "It was the first camera with coaxial snap-on

magazines, which don't need a whole lot of threading. The camera doesn't have a videotap, but it works just fine. Sure, I'd prefer to use an Aaton, but for a 'freebie,' the Eclair makes great sense."

Production got under way during the weekend of Aug. 2, 1996, when Neo provided \$3,000 for 30 rolls of film to shoot a big *Star Trek* convention in L.A. "Most of the original *Trek* cast members were going to be there," Nygard says, "so it was do or die."

Done was accompanied by sound man Larry Scharf, who utilized a mono Nagra recording unit.

The cinematographer shot mostly without filters to ensure a sharp blow-up to 35mm. He brought along Kodak's 100 ASA 7248 film stock for exteriors, as well as some 200 ASA 7293 and 500 ASA

7298 for interiors, though he was not happy with all of the results. "A lot of the time we were shooting recans, because we were low-budget, and we had a bad experience with recans of the 7298 early on," Done says. "The older 98 got grainy and muddy on us, so we ended up buying fresh 98 whenever we needed it."

Done's humble set of lenses performed just fine, however. To create a portrait look during formal, sit-down interviews, he utilized his Angenieux 12-120mm zoom. While doing handheld work on the dimly lit convention floor, he used a wider, faster Angenieux 9.5-57mm zoom to capture the expansive vista of *Trekies* and "Trekabilia." In a dark auction room at the convention center, for example, Done was forced to shoot with the Angenieux wide open in order to capture a fierce bidding war over a Klingon headpiece.

The filmmakers "ambushed" six of the nine cast members of the original *Star Trek* series and convinced them to be in the film — a feat facilitated by the participation of fellow *Trek* veteran Denise Crosby. "We almost always had to interview the actors at a convention where they were appearing, because any time we tried to go through an agent, it never happened," producer Keith Border says. "William Shatner said no to us seven or eight times, but we just kept asking and asking."

When stars like Nichelle Nichols (Lieutenant Uhura) and James Doohan (Engineering Officer Scotty) agreed to be interviewed, Crosby immediately shuttled them over to the camera. "We usually did the interviews in bare rooms that we could commandeer in conference centers or at hotels," Nygard recalls of *Trekies'* nine-month production schedule. "During a sit-down interview, there's not much you can do except zoom in and out and get different frames, but what you *can* do is lighting and set design. That

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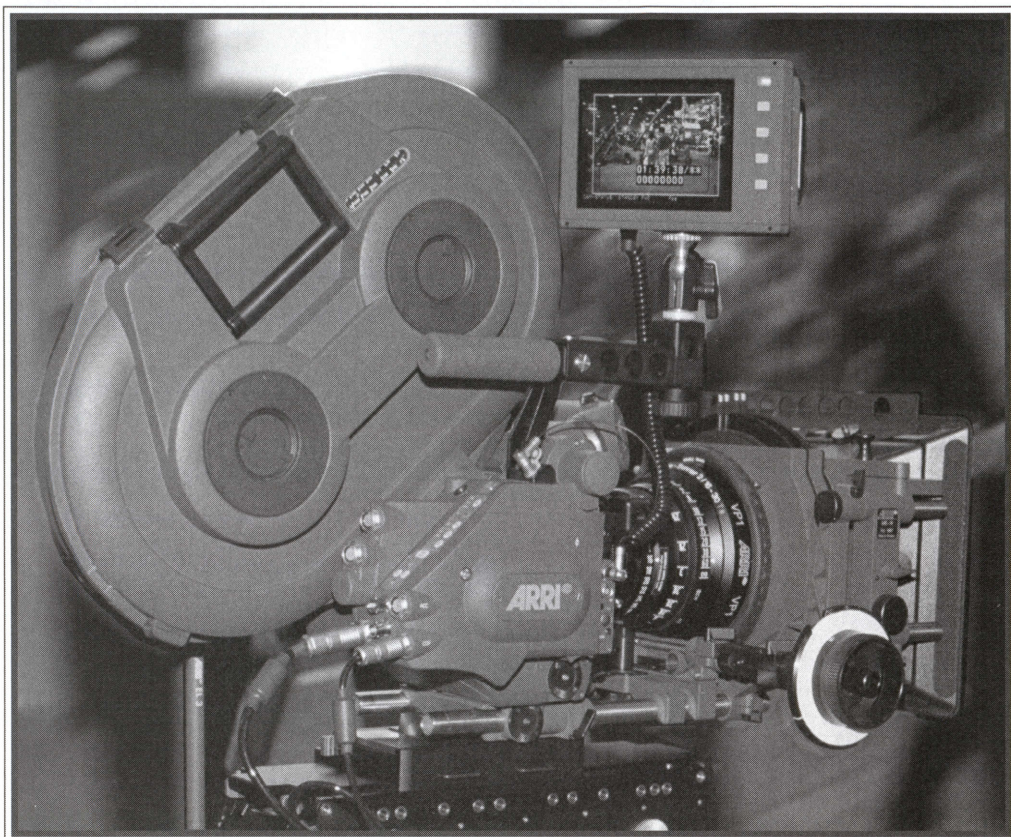
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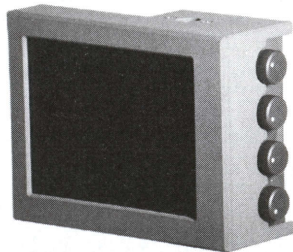
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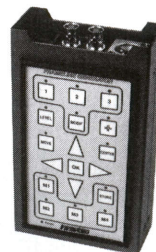
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TREKKIES SIT-DOWN INTERVIEWS

C-stand with pepper on arm



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Subject

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C-stand

Hanging roll of grid cloth

1K or two 2Ks, if needed

Interviewer

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Backlight (hung or on C-stand)

Subject

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Floppy

Interviewer

Key light

Grid cloth roll

Floppy

Camera

Diagrams courtesy of Harris Done

first weekend, we raided the hotel for things we could use as background props for our interviews. We were pretty sneaky, and our subterfuge pretty much went unnoticed. Keith and I would often be out pilfering plants. We even 'stole' a picture off a wall in an elevator so we could hang it behind Nichelle Nichols. We kept changing the backgrounds so it would look as if every interview was done in a different actor's living room.

"The best trick we learned was to take a colored light and beam it on the wall behind the subject," Nygard continues. "We'd just add a blue, green, or a red gel to create a colored wall! It was all done on the same wall, of course. That way, we could change our location without actually having to move."

Done adds that the saturated, primary gel colors lent the interviews a hint of the visual style that graces the original *Star Trek* TV series. Not incidentally, director of photography Gerald Perry Finnerman, ASC has described using this same lighting technique while shooting the original *Trek* series, in order to create different moods on the show's limited sets (see *AC* Oct. '94.).

Done had some other low-budget tricks up his sleeve as well, especially where lighting was concerned. For the sit-down interviews, he brought along his small personal lighting kit: a few baby 1Ks, a 200-watt pepper and a 300-watt midgit, usually for edging or backlight. He also came up with an innovative way to create a big, flattering, soft key light. "I couldn't use 4' by 4' metal frames of gridcloth, because I didn't have a 40' truck and a bunch of gaffers," he says. "Instead, I'd just take a roll of light gridcloth and hang it off a C-stand arm, like a long roll of paper towels, so it would become like a 6' by 4' hanging strip of diffusion. Then I'd bang a 1K through it to create a large, soft key light. That's what I used for most of

the interviews with the original cast members; they're all older now, so it was a very flattering light.

"I'd also bring along a 4' by 4' bounce card and walk it in to bring up as much fill as I needed. When I was done, I would just roll up the gridcloth and put it in a little tube. The concept was primitive but portable." (Done later took this idea one step further when he went to Europe to shoot the Holocaust documentary *The Last Days* for executive producer Steven Spielberg and October Films. He created 4' x 4' "floppies," rolls of black Duvateen that he hung off of C-stands to control a big, soft key light. "I didn't think to do that for *Trekkies*," he says, "but I wish I had.")

While doing informal, on-the-spot interviews with Trekkies on the convention floor, Done's lighting philosophy was simpler. "Most hotels and convention halls are lit by overhead fluorescent or sodium-vapor units, which cast unflattering shadows and sometimes very undesirable color temperatures," the director of photography says. "Whenever possible, I had Keith hold a 650-watt tungsten Sungun with a sheet of gridcloth over it, in order to create a nice color temperature and get [some light] into the subject's eyes. I'd try to overpower the ugly overhead lights as much as possible by throwing white tungsten fill light on the interviewees. I chose the tungsten Sungun both for the price and because it runs longer with fewer batteries. The daylight Sunguns are more temperamental, and they go through batteries much faster."

Some of Done's baby 1Ks were also temperamental, as the cinematographer recalls with a groan. "I'd dug them out of the trash at the USC film-school stockroom, and my roommate rebuilt them," says Done, who has since invested in newer units. "They must have been at least 40 years old, so old that even

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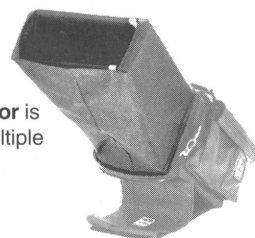
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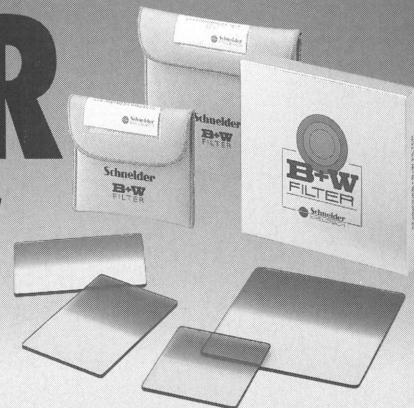


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A dental assistant, a patient having a root canal, and Dr. Denis Bourguignon at work in his "Starbase Dental" office in Orlando, Florida.



students didn't want to use them. I was constantly rewiring them on *Trekkies*. But you know what? They were free!"

After the successful L.A. convention shoot, the filmmakers beamed off to a dozen conventions, including events in Las Vegas, Boston and Jacksonville, Florida. They trekked after a man who had legally changed his name to Captain James T. Kirk; an auctioneer who fetched \$60 for a half-empty water glass used by actor John de Lancie (who plays the mischievous, omnipotent villain Q); a devotee of Brent Spiner (Data on *The Next Generation*) who calls herself a "Spiner-femme"; and a Trekkie transvestite, wearing makeup and a giant wig, who burst into song on camera. The filmmakers also visited Daryl Frazetti, a Trekkie studying to be a veterinarian whose cat, Bones, wears a Dr. McCoy outfit when he watches *Star Trek* with his owner. "We did not want to make fun of the Trekkies," Done insists. "Some individuals seemed a little 'out there,' and it would have been easy, through lighting and camera angles, to make them seem stranger than they were. But we refused to do that.

"Instead, we talked about

always trying to give a more contemporary feeling and a lot of energy to the production. Roger loves camera movement, and as an editor, he loves lots of cuts. He likes a lot of pieces, so I always tried to give him interesting angles and close-ups of Trekkie memorabilia. As a cinematographer, I enjoyed creating order and structure out of the chaos that was unfolding in front of me."

Trekkies was a bare-bones shoot in other significant ways. Because Done and all the other crew members were willing to defer payment, the feature-length documentary's hard-cash outlay was only \$120,000 (the final budget was approximately \$375,000). Nygard recalls that the filmmakers also made frugality a virtue while traveling. "Whenever Denise Crosby was invited to a convention, she would trade in her first-class airfare and we would buy coach tickets for the crew," the director says. "Sometimes she would be able to convince the promoter to throw in an extra hotel room or two, and we'd all cram into the rooms."

When Border couldn't afford to send Done to a particular convention, Minneapolis-based cameraman Timothy B. Johnson

sometimes stepped in with his trusty, wind-up Krasnagorsk K3 16mm camera. Johnson, 29, a videographer, had bought the camera for \$350 in 1994 to teach himself the basics of shooting with film. "I needed a cheap start," he explains, "and the Krasnagorsk comes with a reflex viewfinder, an internal light meter, and a 17-69mm lens, which is unusual for such an inexpensive camera."

Johnson's first film shoot ever was the August '96 *Star Trek* convention in Minneapolis; it was a trial by fire. "The Krasnagorsk only takes 100' spools, so I could only shoot for three minutes before having to reload, which was a real pain," he says. Nevertheless, the cameraman had a radical idea when Nygard asked him to shoot the Vulcan Festival in Vulcan, Canada, two months later. "I thought, 'Why not shoot sound, too?'" Johnson recalls. "So I borrowed a portable DAT recorder, brought my Electro-Voice 635-A omni-directional microphone, and gave it a try."

While interviewing a man who showed off his naturally Vulcan-shaped ears, Johnson perfected his ability to record sound while rolling a noisy, wind-up camera. "The Krasnagorsk makes a very loud, clicking noise, so I would have to shoot in a noisy environment, such as a chatty room, to mask the sound," he says. Johnson also placed the camera up to 10' away from the subject so the microphone wouldn't pick up camera noise. Because the wind-up spring motor only allowed for about 20 seconds of interview time, he rehearsed his interviews ahead of time to avoid wasting film.

Back home in Minneapolis, Johnson interviewed a man who travels around in a homemade "Captain Pike chair." For those not in the know, Captain Pike was a quadriplegic character (played by actor Jeffrey Hunter) who appeared

in "The Menagerie," a two-part episode of the original *Star Trek* series. On the show, Pike travels around in a special life-support system, which looks like a futuristic cross between an iron lung and a wheelchair. In real life, Johnson and his Krasnagorsk trudged after the Trekkie in the Pike chair as he rolled down the street in the snow.

In the end, Nygard used some 11 minutes of Johnson's Krasnagorsk footage in *Trekkies*, including several brief interviews. The director didn't mind that he had to laboriously sync up the sound while editing on Neo's Avid Film Composer 8000. "Tim's DAT was not time-coded, so all of the sound bites in the Vulcan segment were shot on the Krasnagorsk with wild sync," Nygard says. "When I was in the editing room, it all would go out of sync after probably three or four seconds, and I would have to take out a frame or two to get it back into sync. It was very rough sync, but it worked fine for just a couple of sound bites."

The rawness of some of the production adds to the campy fun of *Trekkies*, however. For Nygard, the documentary answers the question of why *Star Trek* is so popular. "A lot of science fiction tends to paint the future as a decrepit, decaying downer — a *Blade Runner*-type of world where things are going to get worse," he explains. "*Star Trek* is the exception. It shows a future where things have improved — human beings get along better, male/female and racial relationships are on an equal basis, and people rise because of merit. *Star Trek* is an ideal world, a utopia that the masses could grasp through a weekly pulp TV show."

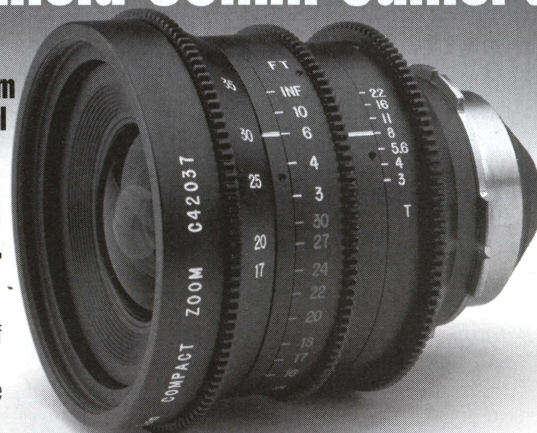
Today, Nygard is editing and producing another sci-fi-themed documentary, *Six Days in Roswell*, which Johnson is directing. What's his lingering memory of *Trekkies*? "Denise, Harris, Keith and I were like the four-headed monster," he says. "We were unstoppable." ■

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by Kathleen Fairweather

On May 6, 1998, I received the following message from Noel Archambault, one of the world's leading large-format 3-D cinematographers: "I'm sorry I can't meet you in Los Angeles for the interview. My plans have changed, and I need to be in Toronto during that weekend and the following week to begin camera testing for *Galápagos*, which has begun preproduction. Then I will be off to the Galápagos Islands for filming. I'm sorry for the change in plans, but my life isn't always predictable these days."

Those were the last words I heard from Noel before he took off for his ill-fated trip. Little did we know how prophetic this final communiqué would become: Noel died in an ultra-light plane crash while filming a 70mm volcano

sequence for *Galápagos Rediscovered*, a joint Imax Corporation/Smithsonian Institute project produced in partnership with Mandalay Pictures.

That crash, which killed both Archambault and his pilot, William Raisner, Jr., ended the life and career

interview with him from his Canadian home the week before he left to film *Galápagos Rediscovered*, which is the story of a modern research expedition exploring the unique bio-diversity of the islands that Charles Darwin made famous.

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of one of the most brilliant 3-D cinematographers of this era.

I had been working with Archambault since last April on a feature story about his life and work as a 3-D cinematographer. I conducted an extensive phone

referred to Archambault as "a renowned stereographer and a major contributor to the development of the technical and film language of the 3-D format." His many 15-perf/65mm works include the recently released *T-Rex: Back to the*



Cretaceous, Mark Twain's *America*, *Nutcracker* and *Across the Sea of Time*, in addition to numerous large-format 2-D projects.

In what ultimately became our last interview, the cinematographer shared some of the many logistics inherent in the making of a movie involving both aerial and underwater 3-D cinematography. Tragically, those very logistics claimed his life on June 26, 1998.

Although Archambault was a one-of-a-kind cinematographer, he was certainly not alone in his quest for adventurous filmmaking. Many other cinematographers and documentarians risk their lives in pursuit of the story, and push the limits to obtain the best shots. "I know I'm asking for it with every new assignment," concedes five-time Emmy-winning director Mark Stouffer, as he packs for his latest film expedition: a death-defying venture which will take him more than 17,000' under the sea.

On this trip, Stouffer will direct the filming of the deepest ocean shipwreck discovery to date for

the upcoming National Geographic Special on the I-52, a Japanese submarine that was sunk while transporting more than 2,000 pounds of gold to the Nazis. The I-52 was destroyed in the Atlantic Ocean on June 23, 1944 by a U.S. Navy Avenger plane piloted by Lieutenant Commander Jesse Taylor. The wreckage and the gold have rested undisturbed on the ocean floor for more than 50 years.

Stouffer and his team will

make this treacherous voyage aboard the *Keldysh*, a Russian research and excavation vessel. In addition to the film crew, the *Keldysh* will transport 87 crew members and 13 scientists. The craft also houses a small hospital complete with a medical doctor. A note forwarded to the film and crew members reads: "We will be a very long way from the nearest land-based hospital. Anyone concerned about this remote location should not be on this trip!"

The filmmakers will be accompanying shipwreck/salvage expert Paul Tidwell, who discovered the wreckage of the I-52 after five years of painstaking research. Tidwell, who served two tours of duty in Vietnam and earned a Purple Heart at age 19, describes the quest as "my personal Everest."

The biggest challenge facing Stouffer and the recovery expedition is, of course, the extreme depth they will reach, where pressure on a vessel's cabin exceeds 7,000 pounds per square inch. The I-52 lies on the ocean floor at a depth that is almost 5,000 feet deeper than the wreckage of the *Titanic*.

Bob Cooke, the assistant operations director on the I-52 discovery expedition, shares an analogy that aptly describes the tremendous force operating at such a depth: "I took a Styrofoam cup, put it

Opposite: In Somalia, U.S. Marine Lance Corporal Harold Clawson stands guard at a ravaged mosque; the photo was taken by late Reuters photographer Dan Eldon. **Left:** A golden eagle attacks wildlife filmmaker Mark Stouffer while shooting in the Rocky Mountains. **Bottom:** A photo by Kevin McKiernan depicts the pain of warfare in Nicaragua.



The Art of Filming Dangerously

Right: Mark, Marty and Marshall Stouffer are treed by an aggressive grizzly bear in Glacier National Park in Montana.
Below: Alex Nipomniaschy records the grim aftermath of guerrilla battles for Jennifer Fox's *Beirut: The Last Home Movie*.

inside a sock, tied it onto a piece of gear and sent it down three miles under the ocean. If I packed the sock just right, the cup would come back the size of a thimble — an exact miniature, hard as a rock with all of the air squeezed out of it.”

These extraordinary working conditions limit the crew's equipment options. Plans for diving on the I-52 include the use of two Russian *Mir* submersibles, used most recently for the filming of *Titanic* (see AC Dec. 1997). This strategy will allow one *Mir* vessel to serve as the camera platform while the other provides the lighting, thus yielding the best possible camera positions and photographic results.

Additionally, Remote Operated Vehicles (ROVs) will be equipped with various equipment packages, including deep-ocean “eyeball” cameras that can slip into tight spaces, and two state-of-the-art digital cameras specially built for the U.S. Navy and provided by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute.



top-secret. With that much gold and money at stake, you never know what can happen. We will also be operating in extreme weather conditions and could experience every conceivable storm pattern — including tsunamis.”

Stouffer acknowledges that he has continued to push the limits of hazardous filmmaking with every new assignment. “Once you are branded an ‘extreme’ filmmaker, it is almost impossible to do anything else,” he says. “The producers all know that, through the course of making my films, I have been through the ‘Navy Seal Boot Camp’ of extreme filmmaking. I know how to take risks and optimize my conditions to obtain the best shots. It seems to be my niche.”

Mal Wolfe, president of Lobo Productions, has also found his calling. Wolfe is a producer and director with more than 25 years of experience in motion picture and television production, including work in the 16mm, 35mm and

While addressing the physical dangers of the shoot, Stouffer alludes to another threat: pirates. “We have kept the coordinates of our position



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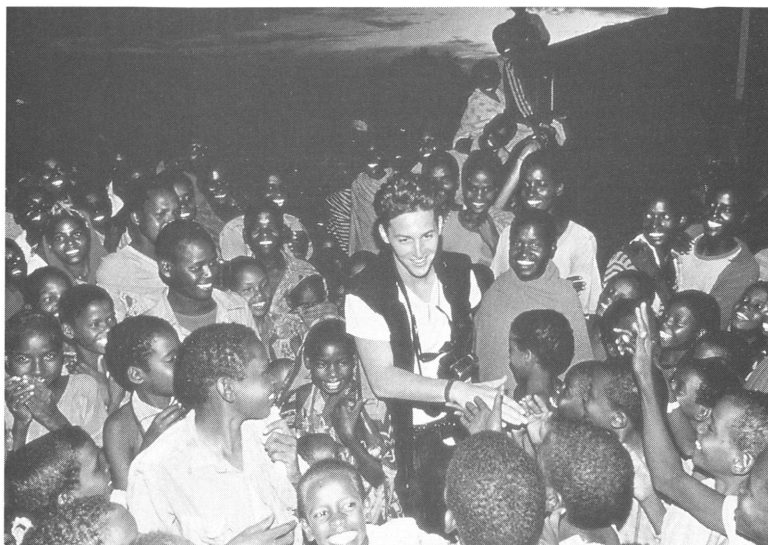
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Right: In a shot taken by Ionnis Bechrakis, photographer Dan Eldon is greeted by Somali youngsters in December of 1992. He and three other journalists were stoned to death in 1993 by a mob incensed by U.S. military attacks in Mogadishu. Below: Filmmaker Nettie Wolfe with Major Moises, a commander of the Zapatista guerrilla army in Chiapas, Mexico (photo by Art Loring).



70mm formats, the latter productions including *The Greatest Places*, *Ring of Fire*, *Search for the Great Sharks* and *The Great Barrier Reef*.

While chasing after dangerous sharks, dodging volcanic eruptions and photographing in some of the world's most exotic and dangerously remote locations, Wolfe has had more than his share of hazardous and potentially deadly encounters. "When we were filming the great white sharks in South Australia, we had specially designed shark cages that would allow a clear, 360-degree view of the encounter being filmed," recalls Wolfe. "The cage was made of Lexan, a strong Plexiglas-like material.

We knew a great white shark could eat its way through the cage if it really wanted to, and we had a really close call during production. Rodney Fox, our associate producer and cameraman, was filming down in the cage when a great white tried to eat the cage. The shark actually severed an air hose and completely tore off a positioning line and buoy. We lost all communication with Rodney for a very long and tense five minutes. Fortunately, he survived the experience shaken but unscathed."

Filming volcanoes is another one of Wolfe's specialties, and he had a few too-close encounters of the deadly kind while working on the

large-format film *Ring of Fire*. "The most difficult thing about filming volcanic eruptions is the volatility and unpredictability of the situation," he says. "There are two basic types of eruptions: ash and lava. The gases emitted from these can be deadly. If you end up downwind of a gas bubble, it will be your last shot ever. Period. During our last production, we were spattered by hot molten lava. I lost several camera lenses to the lava spray. High-magnitude earthquakes are also a big danger. During production, we stayed in hotels that everyone else had evacuated. The ground shook so hard that our beds literally danced across the room."

Wolfe's latest Imax film, *The Greatest Places*, took him to some of the world's most beautiful and challenging locales, including the Amazon River, Greenland, Iguazú Falls, Madagascar, the Namibe Desert, Botswana's Okavango Delta and the plateaus of Tibet.

How does he prepare for these excursions? Wolfe shares some of his own preparation and safety tips: "In addition to the basics — an equipment and crew checklist, medical supplies, med-evac insurance, and health and safety precautions — I always prepare and then prepare some more. You can never be too prepped in this business. In addition to the usual concerns of a film shoot, we are in remote locations with sometimes unknown and extreme conditions. These are usually in unstable environments politically, and we are always at the mercy of disease, injury and bad food. It sounds funny to think of food as a factor, but if the food is bad or spoiled, morale suffers and it can affect the safety of the entire unit.

"Other production wild cards are the governments of these locations. I always make my government and civilian contacts ahead of time, secure presidential,



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military and civic permits, and then prepare a 'gratuities' budget to get us through the rough spots. I've filmed all over the world and have learned that people are people wherever you go. You generally run into problems when you have to deal with foreign governments and bureaucrats. Unless you are prepared, things can get messy and entangled really quickly."

One of the best resources for filmmakers in search of advice on advance preparation is the *Community to Protect Journalists Survival Guide*. The CPJ is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in New York City with a full-time staff of 12 that researches, documents and protests abuses of press and documentary freedoms around the world.

During the Balkans conflict, the CPJ checked with news assignment desks responsible for

orchestrating war coverage, and interviewed U.S. and European journalists who covered the story. The journalists' detailed responses, based on their own experiences, became the backbone of the guide, which was first published in 1992 after the tragic deaths of David Kaplan and more than 20 other journalists covering the Balkans strife.

While this survival guide is primarily tailored for war and conflict documentation, the information can easily be applied to situations in any other extreme environment. Topics include body armor and flak jackets, a first-aid equipment checklist, insurance, telecommunications, and armored vehicles and foreign transportation. Also covered are radio and field contacts, satellite transmissions and tips on such useful accessories as short-wave radios, batteries and

extra-long video leads. There's also information on the use of currencies in negotiations and goods to bring along for barter.

The guide even defines and recommends a conflict-oriented dress code, which details how *not* to look like a soldier on assignment. It is replete with ideas on selecting custom body armor and flak jackets constructed with specially designed armor plates, tailored for the protection needs of cameramen and crew members. "When I first read this survival guide, I got a very real sense of the danger facing me on my upcoming project in the Balkans," explains Nettie Wilde. "I ended up canceling that particular film."

Still, Wilde is no stranger to danger, having filmed guerrilla insurgencies in the Philippines, as well as the Zapatista uprising and resultant village massacres by the Mexican Federales and their right-



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wing supporters in Mexico. The latter documentary, *A Place Called Chiapas*, recently debuted at the American Film Institute Festival in Los Angeles, where it earned high acclaim and an Audience Award for Best Documentary.

Wilde sums up her personal working philosophy by noting, "Research is your ultimate weapon — along with time, trust and money. Money buys you the time to be there, and time is the only real way to gain the trust of the people and fully comprehend the events that you are documenting. You can't just blast in there with your film crew and cameras and expect them to trust you with their story. On *A Place Called Chiapas*, I used a 50/50 combination of Mexican and Canadian crew members. We wanted to document all sides of the revolution. The subjects would see us go back and forth between the encampments, which, of course, made them very nervous and suspicious.

"We were also following a very cruel and hidden war that took place outside of the conflict zone. While the so-called cease-fire was in effect, people were being killed and forced out of their homes and villages. Any supporters of the Zapatistas were targeted, and I was determined to get these people to tell their stories on camera. While we were filming them, they would acknowledge the importance of us being there to document all sides of the story; as soon as I put my camera down and walked away, though, these same people would threaten to kill my Mexican cameraman and sound operator.

"I was relatively safe from these threats, because they knew that I had the Embassy behind me, and that there would be repercussions [if any harm came to me]. That was obviously not the case for my Mexican crew. Of course, the people who were most vulnerable were the

villagers we were filming, who don't even have birth certificates. If they disappeared, there was no evidence to prove they even existed in the first place. The tension that creates is astounding. We got to the point where it was too dangerous for our Mexican crew to continue on to the north with us. We had to go on our own."

Cinematographer Ken Kelsch, ASC, whose many feature credits

include *The Impostors*, *Big Night* and *The Funeral*, recalls his experience in the documentary trenches while in French Guiana: "We were in Suriname to see a live-fire artillery exercise directed by two American mercenaries for the Surinamese Liberation Movement, which entailed a lot of shooting with smuggled AR-14s. The noise drew the attention of the local gendarmes, and when they showed up, everyone

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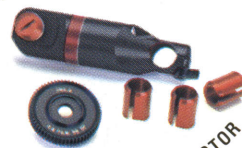
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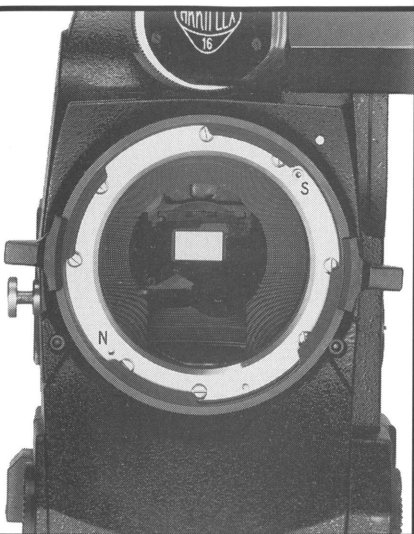
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else disappeared into the woods.

"I was shooting with a small VHS camera, which I left running on the top of a nearby vehicle," Kelsch continues. "I filmed the authorities harassing us, and then palmed the tape and tucked it inside my boot. I later substituted a blank cassette, and when they demanded our film, that was what we handed over. Two days later, our real tape was broadcast internationally on CNN — including in French Guyana and Suriname. We zipped on out of there like ghosts in the night. I now realize that we easily could have been caught and eliminated. Nobody would have known or cared.

"One of the most important things I learned on that kind of assignment is to take lots of cash and Rolex watches as emergency backup to buy your way out of testy situations. It really is the only way to get around in unstable situations. Our cab driver in Suriname freaked when we pulled out our camera inside his cab after a lot of journalists had just been killed. We solved the problem with a very large tip. It was still a huge risk for him — and us. I believe you are dealt a certain amount of luck in life, and no matter how much training and preparation you have, serendipity rules the situation. I have been in situations where I was very lucky to have walked away."

Former CBS News cameraman and filmmaker Lars Nelson, who has documented such risky assignments as narcotics smuggling in Third World countries, agrees. "If you don't take the risk, you won't get the shot," Nelson acknowledges. "On the other hand, if you take that risk, you might just get yourself shot, attacked or even arrested."

Nelson is not alone in his thinking. According to the 1998 *Executive Summary and Survey* prepared by the Committee to Protect Journalists, 26 journalists were murdered in 1997, and 10 other

killings are under investigation. In addition, 129 journalists were imprisoned in 24 countries, with Turkey, Nigeria, Mexico and China responsible for most of the arrests. A 10-year chart tabulates the murders of 474 journalists by region and country.

On May 21, 1996, the Journalists Memorial was established by the Freedom Forum, a non-partisan international foundation dedicated to a free press and the free spirit of all people. Located in Arlington, Virginia's Freedom Park, next to the Newseum, the Memorial bears the names of more than 1,000 journalists who have perished since 1812. To be included in the Memorial, an individual must have been a documentary filmmaker or regular contributor of news, commentary or photography to a broadcast outlet or publication. Also included are producers, camera operators, sound engineers or any other working members of film or news crews.

One name added recently was that of Dan Eldon, a 22-year-old Reuters photographer who was stoned to death along with three other journalists while on assignment in Somalia. Eldon is the subject of *Dying to Tell the Story*, a two-hour documentary that premiered on TBS last September and will air again next month. The documentary follows Eldon's sister, Amy, back to Somalia, where she attempts to comprehend why her brother and other journalists would choose to live a life of risk and danger.

Also featured in this excellent and poignant film are Peter Magubane, who was once jailed and tortured for taking photographs in South Africa during the height of apartheid; Corinne Dufka, a Reuters photographer out of Nairobi who has twice been assigned as a replacement for dead colleagues; and Carlos Mavrolean and other

seemingly fearless camera cowboys and self-identified "adrenaline junkies" who shoot war footage — or, as they call it, "bang-bang" video.

The film also includes an interview segment with one of the world's most notable and widely known television journalists, Christiane Amanpour. As CNN's chief international correspondent, Amanpour has reported from many "hot zones," including the former Yugoslavia and the Persian Gulf. She has earned her network countless news and documentary Emmys, as well as many other awards.

Amanpour shared her views during a recent interview for TBS and *Dying to Tell the Story*. "The primary role of a journalist on the front line is to do your best to tell the story in a situation where the truth is not always readily available," she said. "Risk and danger are inherent in combat reporting. We have to know the difference between calculated and foolish risks. I try to rely on common sense. I talk to the local citizens who are familiar with the lay of the land. In extreme situations, I have used armored vehicles and bulletproof vests. Although I am continually faced with dangerous assignments, I have never turned down a job because of the dangers involved."

Award-winning documentary filmmaker Jennifer Fox, who once traveled with a two-person crew into war-torn Beirut to tell the story of one family's hardships, concurs with Amanpour and offers an explanation for producing her own high-risk documentary: "I took a chance because I believed that I was invincible as a journalist. When I made *Beirut: The Last Home Movie*, I was 21 years old and thought I was never going to die. I look back now and realize how dangerous that was. However, some things — no matter how dangerous — are worth filming. I was very passionate about that film. War is hellacious, and what you do to



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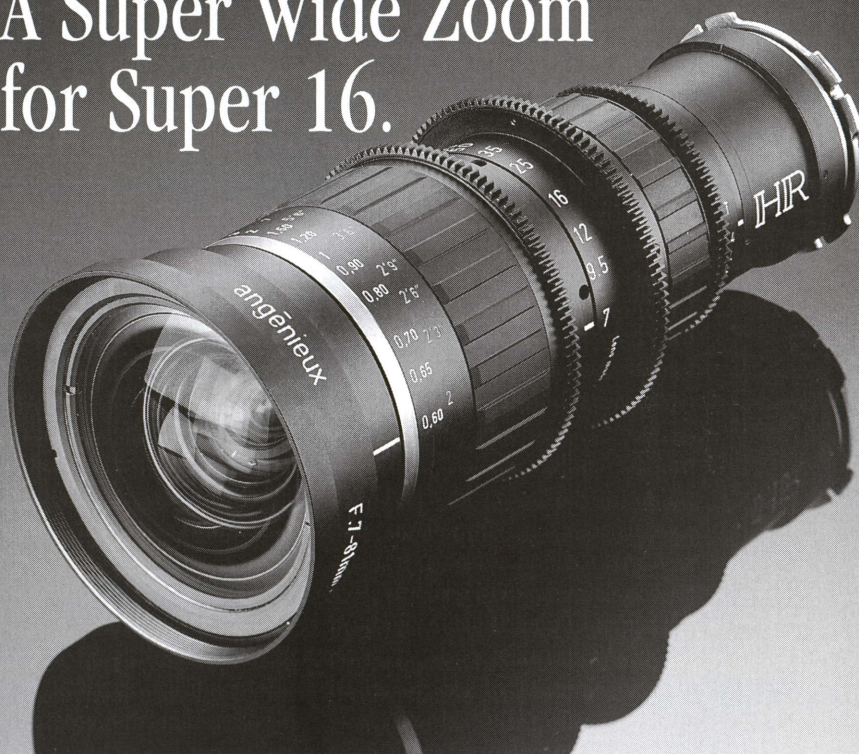
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yourself to get through the experience is very, very numbing and negative. I believe you [have to] destroy a part of yourself to work in such an extreme environment."

What attracted Fox as a filmmaker to take that kind a risk? "I was seduced by the story and the power of the emotions," she says. "Nothing compares to a story of that intensity, or the simplicity of basic survival. I believe there are people who feel more alive during war and become addicted to the adrenaline and intensity of the emotions."

Unlike Amanpour, who does a great deal of prep work at CNN, Fox admits that she did little to gird herself against her dangerous undertaking. "I was very naive at 21," she says. "We were at risk the whole time we were there. There was constant shelling and miscellaneous warfare, especially during the five weeks we spent with the soldiers during maneuvers. When I came back home, I went into a kind of shock. I would never, ever go into a war zone again. I survived on guts and luck."

Santa Barbara-based filmmaker Kevin McKiernan agrees with Amanpour and Fox. McKiernan, who documented the siege at Wounded Knee, has covered the Contra/Sandinista war in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador, and counter-insurgency in Guatemala, is now working on a film focusing on the plight of the Turkish Kurds, entitled *Trouble in Paradise: The Untold Story of 2 Million Refugees*.

McKiernan, who also co-produced the documentary special *The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, which aired recently on PBS' *Frontline*, explains, "There is an illusion of safety when the camera is in front of your face. Although it is not a shield from the danger or the reality of the situation you are filming, it creates a kind of distance. I'm very good at calculating the risks, but sometimes I must calculate them under extreme duress.

"I constantly ask myself, 'How good am I before I make mental errors?' I believe I know when to quit; however, I am usually sleep-deprived and running on empty while I am making those decisions. I have learned, though, that it is okay not to always go after the gold. I have learned to sometimes settle for the silver and be happy with that shot. There is a moment in every cameraman's life when you know you've done enough. Knowing when to quit is everything, but at the same time, it is also a very hard decision to make."

McKiernan acknowledges the dangers of staying too long in a volatile situation. "Your presence always changes things," he notes. "It is impossible to be there as just a fly on the wall. You can completely change the tone and the outcome of an event just by being there with a camera."

On more than one occasion, locals in various places have offered to stir things up by verbally harassing villagers and throwing rocks at them. "Do we make things worse or better?" McKiernan wonders, adding with a sigh, "Sometimes they see us as snitches, when we simply point our cameras at the truth. Still, the personal fulfillment and rewards are great — even in the most dire of circumstances."

One person who agrees with this sentiment is Emmy-winning director David Breashears, who filmed and coordinated a daring rescue that saved several lives while making the McGillivray Freeman large-format film *Everest* (see full coverage in AC May '98). He sums up the dangers of hazardous cinematography by concluding, "It is very hard to imagine what can be accomplished in the face of adversity and tragedy. Filmmaking is no exception." ■

Short Takes

Photographic Effects for a Wild Ride by Stephanie Argy

For Kyle Bergersen, a cinematographer and director at November Films, part of the fun of working on commercials is learning more about cinematography. "What I already know bores me," he says. "I think I would quit if I ever felt that I knew it all."

To keep himself engaged, Bergersen pushes himself to try new techniques and equipment with each job. "What can I learn about?" he asks. "That's what keeps me interested." On a recent spot for Honda motorcycles, for instance, Bergersen experimented with black-and-white and infrared film stocks, shutter angles and skip-bleach processing.

The job came to Bergersen through Dailey and Associates, an ad agency for which he had done other Honda spots in the past. In the first half of the commercial, a man and woman ride an enormous black motorcycle from Marysville, Ohio, where it is manufactured, to Montana, where there is no speed limit. In the second half of the commercial, the bike roars through Montana; then, as it leaves the state, its brake lights flash on again.

For the purposes of the shoot, "Montana" was actually located about an hour north of Los Angeles, at Lake Castaic, California. Other locations to represent the rest of the country between Ohio and the "Big Sky" state were also found in close proximity.

The first half of the spot was the journey, and Bergersen asked himself, "How do we, in the most interesting way, show [these people] getting there?" Though he wanted to reserve his planned shutter-angle and skip-bleach

effects for the Montana-set segment, he tried to liven up the trip with a variety of landscapes and different photographic looks, partially achieved through the use of black-and-white and infrared emulsions.

"I got a bit disappointed while I was playing with various filters," Bergersen admits. He shot some sequences with Kodak's Double-X 5222 black-and-white negative, using a deep-green filter. He expected the filter to lighten the foliage on the trees, but because the trees were largely in shadow, the effect was barely noticeable. With infrared film, however, Bergersen got exactly the look he wanted by using a red 25 filter. He explains, "We shot it in the same situation as the 5222, but the infrared was much more interesting."

In the infrared footage, as the motorcycle passes under the trees, the leaves are nearly white, as if the bike were moving through a grove of blossoming cherry trees. Bergersen rated the infrared at 200 ASA and had the film processed at Cheshire System Inc., a lab in North Hollywood, California.

Much of Bergersen's guidance on how to shoot with the infrared stock came from one of the show's production assistants, an amateur photographer who had been playing with infrared film in still form for about a year. The PA brought in proof sheets and suggested which filtration would be most effective. "Always be nice to PAs," Bergersen advises, "because in two years, they're gonna be hiring you."

Bergersen says that the best thing about infrared film is that, unlike other stocks, it doesn't have an antihalation backing. "It gives that bloom in the whites that everybody is trying to achieve," he explains. Without the backing, light passes through the film, hits

the pressure plate and bounces back onto the film again; any bright surfaces on the pressure plate (which are often chrome finished) are imprinted on the negative. The way to negate this effect is to have a totally black pressure plate. On the Arriflex 35-III camera used to shoot the Honda spot, this was easily accomplished with a black "Sharpie" marker. "Blacking the plate out protects the blacks and grays, but your whites are going to bloom no matter what," Bergersen cautions.

For the Montana portion of the spot, Bergersen wanted to give the impression of speed and excitement,

"What I already know bores me. I think I would quit if I ever felt that I knew it all."

— director/cinematographer
Kyle Bergersen

which he achieved with a combination of skip-bleach processing and a reduced shutter angle.

"It took us a while to sell the agency on the idea of skip bleach," says Bergersen. Even after the shoot, they still weren't sure whether they wanted to go through with it. Because the spot didn't have a tight deadline, they waited 10 days to process the film, trying to decide what to do with it. Finally, though, they did agree."

Bergersen found that the skip-bleach process did much less than he expected for the blacks on his prints. "I was told we were going to see a lot of noise in the blacks," he says. He explains that there are two different kinds of film noise: electronic and chemical. He adds that chemical (in the form of film grain), is "the far superior noise

that we're trying to create." With skip-bleach, he continues, "you see interesting chemical noise in the whites."

On a negative that has gone through skip-bleach processing, he says, the dark grays shift almost immediately to black. As a result, the print made from such a negative will have whites that are much more pronounced than they would have been otherwise. In tests, Bergersen found that overexposing the image didn't mesh well with skip-bleach, because both techniques serve the same function of flattening out the whites. Underexposed and normal footage suited the process well, though Bergersen says he didn't see much of a difference after the telecine process.

He notes that it is possible to create a faux skip-bleach look in telecine, but that cinematographers may still insist on doing it chemically. "Ultimately, the reason you do this is to limit people's options," he says. "That's the only reason you do anything in-camera now, especially for commercials."

For the Montana sequence, Bergersen also tightened his shutter angle to 15 degrees, rather than the usual 180 degrees. "I like to be very obvious," he says. "I can see the difference of shooting at 45 degrees, but only the trained eye can. You've got to have really violent action to really see it working."

Combining skip-bleach and a narrow shutter also reaped Bergersen a few unexpected benefits. A few hours into the shooting day, as the sun climbed into the sky, these methods combined to produce the effect of glitter on the black asphalt. The skip-bleach dramatically brought out any white reflections, while the narrow shutter made the enhanced whites much more crisp and visible.

Still later, the sun rose even higher, and suddenly the asphalt on the film turned dramatically white, looking almost like the sands of the Great Salt Lake, where Bergersen had shot a previous Honda spot. The motorcycle remained as black as ever, however. "Only the street is overexposed," Bergersen notes.

The filmmaker didn't alter anything to accomplish the look; all that

was changing was the angle of the sunlight. The brilliant white asphalt provides an perfectly contrasting background for the black motorcycle, an effect that Bergersen calls "a pleasant surprise."

Though Bergersen photographed the Honda job himself, he only shoots about half of the commercials he directs. He directs and operates the camera on another 30 percent, and only directs the remaining 20 percent. "November Films would rather have me be just a director," he says. However, he adds, "sometimes being a cinematographer is perceived by the agency as a good thing."

Bergersen began his career on a video news crew in Omaha, Nebraska. After a year, he went to film school at the University of Iowa, then moved to Seattle and bought himself a 16mm Arri-flex SR package. "In the smaller markets," he says, "if you don't own it, you don't get to use it."

For the first few years, he rented out his package, including himself as an assistant. Then he began shooting, and for five years he worked as a director of photography in the Seattle area. He also directed a handful of spots and made two low-budget features.

Ultimately, though, he became frustrated with the low budgets he was seeing in the Northwest, feeling that he had stretched things about as far as they could go. He sent a spec reel to November Films via an advertising agency he had worked with, and piqued the company's interest. Soon afterward, he moved to Los Angeles and joined November's roster of directors.

At first, Bergersen admits, he was a little apprehensive about collaborating with other directors of photography. "November was very into my working with A-list commercial cinematographers. I was a bit nervous that I wouldn't get what I wanted out of them." However, he says his only real problem was that in the heat of the shoot, he would sometimes forget to communicate with the cinematographer and the operator, because he was so used to doing those jobs himself and not having

to talk to anyone about them.

Working with such cameraman as Joseph Yacoe and Kirk Bachman proved to be a positive experience. "They were great to work with," says Bergersen. "They were very talented, but because of my background, I was immediately able to ask them for something that was *possible*. Just by selecting the camera placement, I was able to get them into a zone where they could work."

The cinematographers have also given Bergersen numerous pointers. Yacoe, for example, has made him a devotee of Kodak's Vision stocks, especially the Vision 500T 5279. Bachman, on the other hand, taught Bergersen one of his current favorite tricks, an in-camera technique that results in enormous, dancing sparkles on the image. To create the effect, which Bergersen used on the Honda spot, silver Mylar is stretched across the camera's eyebrow and cut into vertical strips about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch thick, with every other strip removed. The effect works best on a long lens, Bergersen says. "You can get away with an 85mm, but it's better with a 200mm or longer, wide-open."

Most importantly, says Bergersen, watching the other cinematographers at work has dramatically accelerated his learning curve. "Once I figured that out, I was happy," he concludes. ■

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New Products

compiled by Michele Lowery and Andrew O. Thompson



Versatile Camera Mount

Cinekinetic now offers the MiniSaddlecam (also called the Cine-saddle), which is designed for the new range of DV cameras and domestic camcorders. Weighing less than one pound and measuring 8" x 10" x 11", the MiniSaddlecam is a versatile camera mount. Lighter and smaller than a tripod, the MiniSaddlecam allows the camera to be mounted in confined spaces. The included car-mounting kit enables the MiniSaddlecam to be attached to moving objects — such as a dolly or a skateboard — and moving vehicles. The MiniSaddlecam is completely self-contained and comes with everything needed to start work immediately. While panning and tilting techniques are different, the motions are as easy as if one were using a fluid head. When mounted on a movable support object such as a baby carriage, the angle can be altered by pointing the MiniSaddlecam-mounted camera forward, backward or sideways. The MiniSaddlecam can also be pushed or pulled across smooth surfaces, eliminating the need for an external dolly.

Cinekinetic, (61)-8-9459-3690,

fax (61)-8-9493-2168, e-mail: info@cinekinetic.com, website: www.cinekinetic.com.

Red-Sensitive Effects Stock

Ilford's SFX 200 negative motion picture film is a medium-speed, panchromatic black-and-white film for creating special effects by exploiting its extended red sensitivity (up to 740nm). Using a very deep red filter, skies can be rendered almost black, while vegetation comes across as almost white. The emulsion has a rating of EI 200/24 to daylight and EI 100/21 to tungsten light (3200°K). Any yellow, orange or red filter may be used, but the effect will depend on its transmission characteristics. The redder the filter, the more dramatic the effect. If a glass filter is used in the

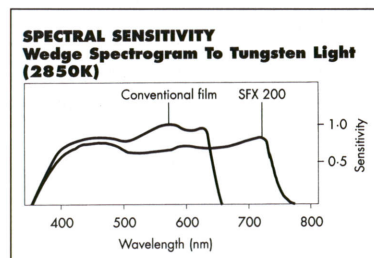
matte box in front of the lens, the choice of filter is limited by the view through the lens. For example, a very deep red filter could obscure the image and make it impossible for the camera operator to follow the action. Lighter red filters, which will create some level of this effect with SFX 200, are the 25-type filters (red, 50 percent at 600nm) and the 29-type filters (deep red, 50 percent transmittance at 625nm). With a gel filter used behind the lens, the camera operator's view is not obscured, and very deep red filters can be used for greater effect. The SFX 200 stock is available in both 16mm (in 100' and 400' lengths) and 35mm (in 100', 400' and 1,000' lengths).

Ilford, (201) 265-6000, fax (201) 265-3443, website: www.ilford.com.

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Gamfloor is a self-adhesive vinyl floor covering suited for theater, television and film production. Gamfloor is available in 16 matte and gloss colors, including Chroma Key Green and Blue. The covering is 4mm thick and dyed through each layer. The self-adhesive backing makes it easy to install — 1,000 square feet can be laid in about half an hour and walked on immediately. Gamfloor can be washed, waxed or painted; when you are through, just peel it up to restore your studio in minutes. There is no messy clean-up, no residue, no smell, no drying time, no waiting. Gamfloor can be applied to concrete, vinyl, wood, painted surfaces, glass, plaster and almost any floor, wall or window. Gamfloor comes in rolls that are 48" wide by 100' long (enough to cover 400 square feet), and each roll weighs approximately 18 pounds.

Gamfloor, (323) 461-0200, fax (323) 461-4308, website: www.gamonline.com.



Blanketing Bulbs

Kino Flo now features the flexible Blanket-Lite, which can be draped on a wall like a curtain of light, stretched on a frame, or rolled up like a rug for transportation. The Blanket-Lite is 6' x 6' in size, has a trim profile of 10" and weighs in at 28 pounds. As a cool, flexible lighting system, the Blanket-Lite can be mounted quickly to a wall or wrapped around a setpiece. Like other Kino Flos, the unit is high-output, flicker-free and cool to the touch. The Blanket-Lite offers either daylight- or tungsten-quality light, or a mixture of either in the same system. Blanket-Lite diffusion packages create controlled nuance shifts in beam gradient and color. A specially designed fabric louver focuses and hardens light. The Blanket-Lite can also be used as a building block to create much larger sources, such as 6' x 12', 12' x 12', 12' x 18', 18' x 18', etc. The package comes with a 6' x 6' metal frame, snap-on diffusion, 4Bank Mega select ballasts, four 25' head extensions, and two

lightweight road cases. Accessories include a fabric louver and other diffusion packages.

Kino Flo, (818) 767-6528, fax (818) 767-6528, e-mail: kinoflo@aol.com, website: www.kinoflo.com.

Cam Jib

Trovatocine presents the newest addition to its comprehensive line of jib arms and accessories, the Cam Jib Model 48, which is shown here on the Trovato Pedestal mounted to the Eagle II dolly (manufactured for Eagle Systems by Trovato Mfg. Inc.). This unit boasts the same easy setup as the Cam 36 and offers 5' 8" of vertical travel and 5' of reach. The new larger base allows the Cam 48 to mount easily to a wider variety of tripods and other supports. With a recommended payload of 35 pounds, the Cam 48 was designed for all video and 16mm applications, and some 35mm use.

Trovatocine, (716) 244-3310, fax (716) 461-9226.

DV Splashbag

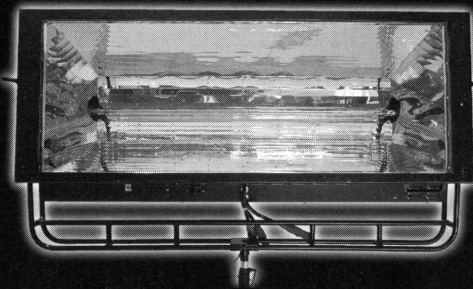
OpTex announces a new product for the Canon XL-1 digital camcorder, the SurfAce Splashbag, a dustproof, watertight, flexible environmental housing made from 1.2mm thick natural latex. The Splashbag has been designed so that the camera can be used in the sea, desert, rain forests, or in swimming pools. It can be submerged to a maximum of 20'/6m. The front port is fixed to an internal shoe, to which the camera is also attached via a wedge plate and sliding quick-release system. The bag will accept the XL-1 fitted with Canon's 3x lens, the 16x lens supplied with the camera, or the 16x lens with the OpTex wide-angle lens set. Operational controls can be felt through the latex material and there are three cable nipples for external recording. The lightweight SurfAce Splashbag requires no modification to camera or lens and works for the "half in, half out" shot, or the transition from below to above the water's surface.

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0.6x Converter

Cavision Enterprises Ltd. has unveiled the .6x Wide Angle Converter. Designed specifically for the digital camcorder market, this converter mounts on the front of the Canon XL-1's standard 16:1 zoom lens, increasing coverage by 40 percent while still providing full zooming capability. This is accomplished with minimal distortion, no light loss and no vignetting. Featuring multi-coated glass elements and an aluminum housing, the .6x converter is securely attached by a 72mm thread, allowing it to be mounted on a variety of zooms used in the indus-

trial market, such as the UVW series, DVCam, and DVPro.

Cavision (604) 605-7015, fax (604) 856-6781, website www.cavision.com

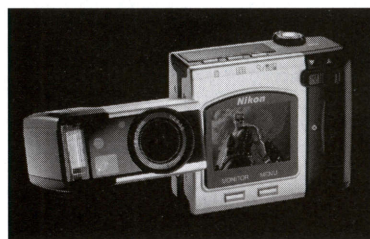
Digital Still Camera

Nikon introduces the Coolpix 900, an advanced high-resolution digital still camera that produces photo-quality digital images and final prints up to 8" x 10" in size. Like its predecessor, the Coolpix 900 comes with standard with the Nikkor, nine-element, seven-group, 3x optical zoom lens (38-115mm equivalent). The unit includes a 2x digital teleconverter that provides up to 6x zoom capability (230mm equivalent), a macro mode (with a minimum distance of 3") and an infinity setting. Thanks to its "pivoting lens" design, a twist of the wrist can put the lens exactly where the photographer wants it. Using the full-motion 2" LCD as a viewfinder, users can get unusual angles. The camera also has a traditional optical viewfinder.

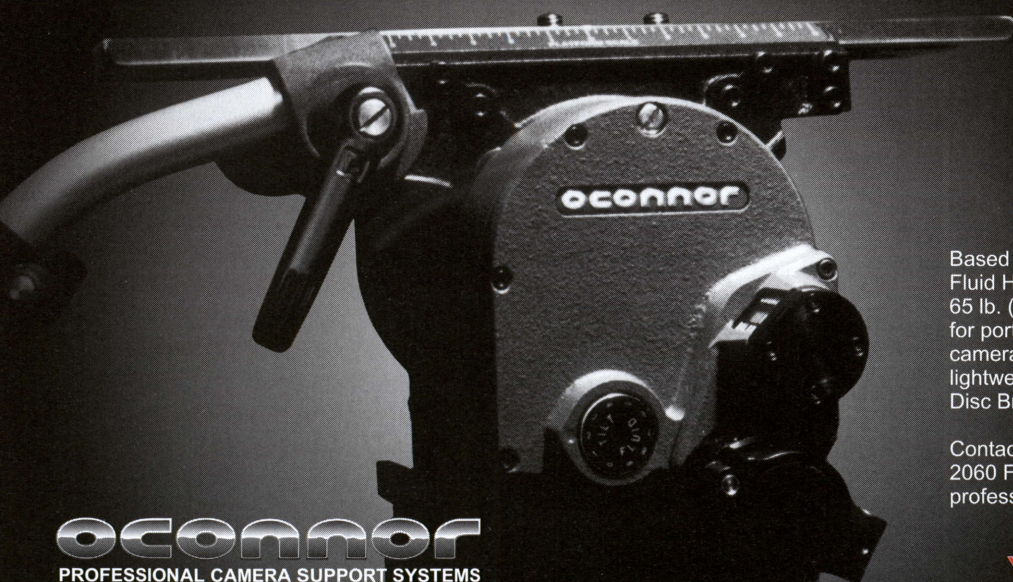
The 900s feature a 1.3 million

pixel CCD (1280 x 960 resolution), exclusive three-mode metering, a five-mode speedlight, 945-step autofocus, and the capacity to shoot two frames per second. Its autofocus system consists of a precise Contrast Detect process to zero in on subjects with the sharpest possible focus, and three auto-exposure-metering modes (spot, center-weighted and 64-element matrix) help assure accurate exposure settings.

The 900s shoot up to two frames per second in VGA mode, and one frame every four seconds in XVGA mode (1280 x 960 resolution). Images are stored on industry-standard, compact flash cards in a 1:4 (fine), 1:8 (normal), or 1:16 (basic) compression ratio. The camera has an



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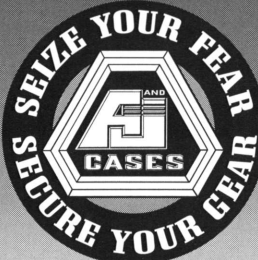
Based on OConnor's Academy Award Winning 2575 Fluid Head, the new Ultimate 2060 has a capacity of 65 lb. (29.5kg) @ 6" above the platform. It's perfect for portable production video, lightweight studio video cameras with prompters, 16mm, super 16mm, and lightweight 35mm. Brand new features include a Pan Disc Brake and a Positive Tilt Lock Pin.

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8MB compact flash card with additional cards available up to a 32MB. The 900s also offers shorter exposure compensation steps from 1EV per step to ½ EV per step up to +2EV. Additionally, the camera offers a new "card format" function which enables users to delete unwanted images even in the play mode, as well as a recall function of selected flash modes after the power has been turned off.

When its IPIX immersive technology is utilized in combination with its 183-degree fisheye lens, the user can create 360 x 360-degree QTVR-type images. By operating a mouse, IPIX immersive images enable viewers to "step" inside a picture and tour an area with unlimited viewing perspectives. Also included are Nikon View 900, an image-acquisition extension for Microsoft Windows Explorer; Adobe Photo Deluxe 2.0, for a variety of manipulation options; InMedia Slides and Sounds, for creating multimedia presentations; and Enroute Quick Stitch for panorama stitching.

The pocket-sized Coolpix 900s weight 12 ounces, measures 6.1" x 3.0" x 1.4" and runs on AA alkaline, nickel cadmium, nickel metal hydride or lithium batteries. An optional AC adapter is also available.

Nikon Inc., (800) 52-NIKON, website: www.nikon.usa.



Laminated Filters

Schneider Optics announces the development of MaxTran, an anti-reflection multi-coating for laminated filters designed to maximize light transmission. New Schneider MaxTran MC filters are designed to meet or exceed the military standards, and pass all aspects of applicable "Mil-Spec" coating test standards. Schneider multi-coated filters come in square and rectangular sizes, including 4" x 4", 4" x 5.650" (Panavision size), and

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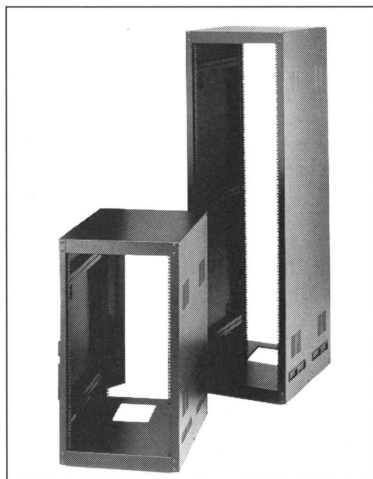
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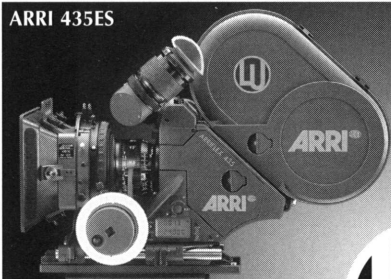
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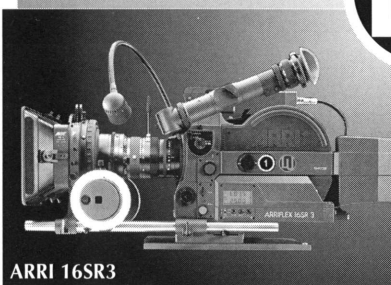
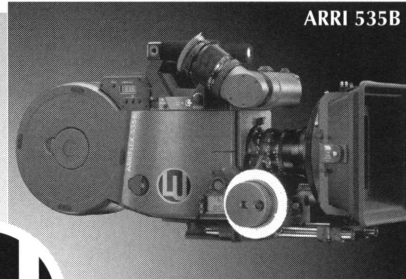
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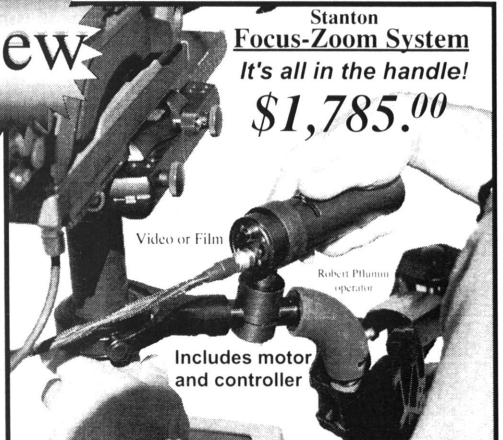


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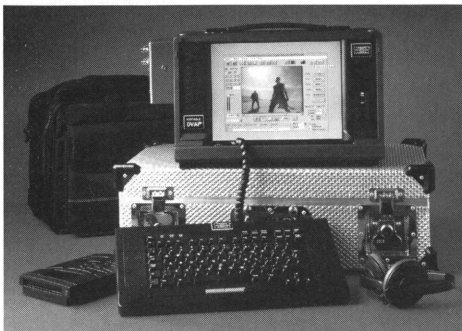
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Virtual Lighting Software

Robert McNeel & Associates unveil AccuRender 3, radiosity/raytrace rendering, animation, virtual reality (VR), and lighting analysis software for AutoCAD. The subtle indirect lighting effects are accurately calculated from the actual physical properties of lights and materials. Radiosity also provides lighting simulation and analysis. Designers can interactively browse a fully rendered AutoCAD model. AccuRender's VR technology provides high-speed 3-D browsing on any Windows 95/98/NT PC or across the Web without special hardware. AccuRender can use panorama technology such as Smoothmove Panoramas and LivePicture Panoramas. AccuRender 3 takes advantage of the newest Windows operating system technologies, including support for multiple processors, OpenGL preview display and the newest Windows interface features. The libraries now include over 5,000 materials and 500 plants. A new light fixtures library includes more than 300 fixtures with IES data as well as a number of lighting manufacturer's libraries. Complex, customizable, 3-D procedural materials make substances such as marble tile and wood parquet easy to simulate. An interactive materials editor provides a "live" raytraced preview of up to six materials at once. New file formats support includes AVI, 32-bit TGA, VRML, Smoothmove and LivePicture Panoramas. Other enhancements include soft shadows, blurry reflections and transparency, depth of field, enhanced anti-aliasing, and enhanced foliage geometry. AccuRender creates photorealistic, 16-million color images, animations, and virtual realities directly from AutoCAD 3-D models. AccuRender also allows the user to try



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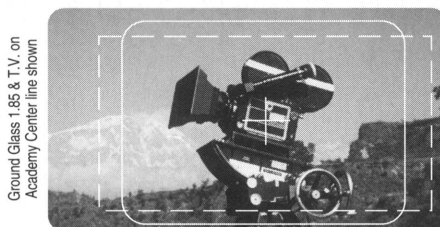
There are both 1000 ft. and 400 ft. displacement type magazines. A new feature is the light valve which allows the operator to direct all the light to the viewing system, or to the video assist, or combo which splits the light between both viewing and video assist.



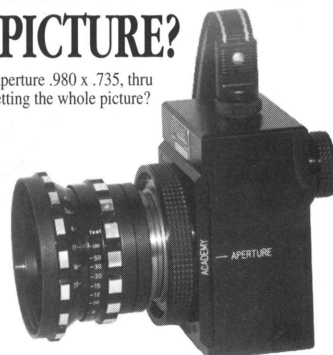
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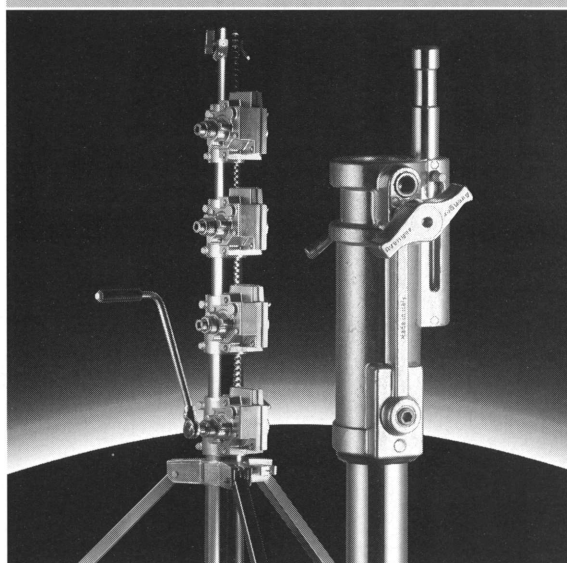


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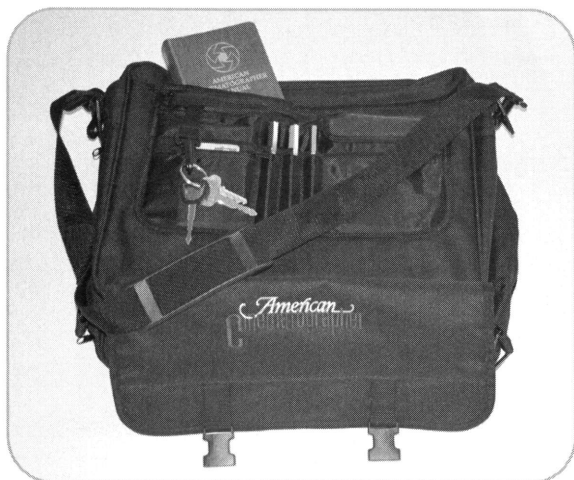
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Points East

Documentary's One-Man Band

by Eric Rudolph

Documentary moviemaker Ross McElwee always serves as the protagonist, narrator and one-man crew of his films. On *Sherman's March* (1986), the laconic North Carolina native wandered around the South, mostly shooting his family's and his own unsuccessful attempts to find him a mate. He's made two other films in the same riveting style — *Time Indefinite* and *Six O' Clock News*. Following suit is his newest film, a study of the tobacco industry tentatively titled *Tobacco Road*, which is expected to debut this summer on public television.

Tobacco Road's ostensible plot is an exploration of the life of the filmmaker's great-grandfather, an early tobacco tycoon who lost his fortune to one of the South's most famous families — the Duke dynasty. (McElwee says that the 1950 Hollywood feature *Bright Leaf*, directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Gary Cooper, Lauren Bacall and Patricia Neal, was based on his great-grandfather's story.)

Tobacco Road, however, is likely to end up more as a study of the "complexity of addiction" — corporate, physiological and biological — and the way that tobacco has woven itself into the psyche of North Carolina," says McElwee from his office at Harvard University, where he works as a film instructor. "It will also explore, on some sort of a philosophical level, why we do things that aren't good for us. Cigarettes are sort of an emblem of that question: why do we tempt fate and flirt with something that is very destructive? There is a kind of fascination with cigarettes that's been around for 150 years. I'm very interested in the psychological aspects of that fixation. I

also plan to explore the way in which tobacco — a unique agricultural product — physically casts its spell on the landscape of a whole area of the country."

McElwee's basic approach is to look at the world through the lens of "people and places that I know well. I make a point of filming people who are not public figures, people who are not experts and used to the media."

Looking back on *Sherman's March* (which earned the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival), McElwee notes that the grant-financed documentary was going to concentrate on Union General Sherman's famously destructive Civil War campaign through the South. "The film was going to be a contemporary cinema-vérité portrait of the South in the shadow of the Civil War, and likely would have included my friends and relatives," McElwee explains. "But it was not planned to be as explicitly autobiographical as it turned out."

McElwee's secret for getting people to open up and offer relevant, entertaining and thought-provoking insights into big issues is partly found in his technical approach to film production. "I elect to work as a crew of one. From a technical point of view that has its drawbacks. It is very hard to do 16mm double-system sound filmmaking yourself, recording your own sound while shooting footage. However, it allows an autonomy and spontaneity; you are much less imposing as a filmmaker when you are just by yourself talking to people.

"I'm not sure I'd recommend this style to everyone," he warns. "Sound quality suffers, and I often find it difficult

to do basic things like changing the focal length on the zoom lens, because my left hand is holding a microphone."

In *Tobacco Road*, McElwee again uses this unusual approach very effectively. While visiting the area where his grandfather's farmhouse once stood, he has a charming and insightful encounter with some teenaged female beauty-school students who are taking a

"It is very, very difficult to work without a script... It is also invigorating and quite exciting when it works out."

— documentarian
Ross McElwee

cigarette break across the street. He also shot extensively in the tobacco fields, and some scenes demonstrate how tobacco pickers suffer from the effects of constant, direct contact with the plant.

McElwee's films are nothing if not discursive. When he visits a distant relative with the purpose of discussing the family's relationship to tobacco, he finds that the man has converted a huge basement to store an astonishingly large collection of precisely-organized and seemingly endless motion-picture prints and movie memorabilia. The man discusses his hobby with a casual air that cannot hide his fervor. "He seems to like movies," McElwee comments with his trademarked low-key drollery, as his camera surveys row after pristine row of 35mm prints.

McElwee's deadpan commentary is an important part of, and counterpoint to, the images onscreen. His style of filmmaking developed from his interests

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in still photography, cinema vérité and writing. "The writing surfaces in the subjective narration," he says. "I decided to experiment with juxtaposing the subjectivity of the filmmaker's thoughts, observations and feelings with this objectively gathered visual information. There is something really interesting about working with those two extremes, which normally shouldn't go together. True cinema vérité eschews narration of any kind. But here I am not only narrating this footage but doing it with highly subjective thoughts and reflections."

McElwee currently works with his own Aaton LTR and an assortment of prime and zoom lenses, lately favoring the Cooke 10.4-52mm T2.8 short zoom. He says technological advances in sound recording have made his life much easier: "I made one of my first films, *Backyard*, lugging a full-size Nagra 4.2 on one shoulder and the movie camera on the other. It's the Sherpa approach to filmmaking!" On *Sherman's March*, he used a Nagra SL recorder, the tiny 1/8-inch format reel-to-reel favored by law enforcement for use as a body wire; McElwee currently uses the DAT format.

Likewise, the improvements in 16mm film stocks have been a boon to McElwee's process. He loves Kodak's Vison 500T 7279 stock for shooting in his usual low-light situations, and 50 ASA 7245 for outdoor work. The documentarian almost never uses traditional film lighting: "I've found that movie lights get in the way of spontaneity and good rapport." Instead, he opts for available light or replaces household bulbs with low-watt Photofloods.

Despite the rigors of making films solo, the rewards are quite evident onscreen. "The beauty of this type of filmmaking is that it really can lead you down roads that you would never anticipate," explains McElwee. "It is very, very difficult to work without a script or the preproduction that most documentaries have. It is also invigorating and quite exciting when it works out."

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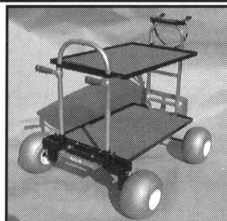


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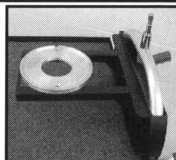
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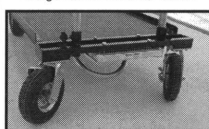
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Books in Review

by **George Turner**

Joseph H. Lewis
by *Francis M. Nevins*
Scarecrow, 152 pps.,
cloth, \$32.50

Although much has been written about director Joseph H. Lewis in magazines, programs and omnibus chapters, this tome is the first sizable account of his life and career. The author, a Professor of Law whose writings include a superb biography of writer Cornell Woolrich, rightly calls it an "overview, interview and filmography." It's quite fine while it lasts — so much so that it leaves one wishing there were more. Nevins's narrative is interleaved with recollections and comments by Lewis, who is still with us. Lewis speaks honestly about the people with whom he worked, but with less vitriol than one encounters in too many Hollywood reminiscences.

Born in New York City to Russian immigrants, Lewis came to Hollywood in 1925 and got a job as a gofer in MGM's editorial department. Ten years later, Nat Levine mistook him for his older brother, a leading film editor, and hired him as supervising editor at Mascot Pictures and then Republic. His first directorial effort was "fixing" a botched Grand National picture in 1937. While working on Bob Baker and Johnny Mack Brown Westerns at Universal, Lewis earned the nickname of "Wagon-Wheel Joe" because he shot so many scenes through wagon-wheel foregrounds.

There were more wagon wheels at Columbia with Charles Starrett and Wild Bill Elliott. Many low-budget pictures followed, including Bela Lugosi and East Side Kids pictures at Monogram, melodramas for PRC, a Lionel Atwill thriller for Universal and a Falcon film for RKO.

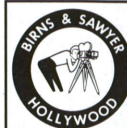
Regardless of whether or not these pictures had anything of narrative substance to offer, all of them boasted outstanding photographic composition. It was at Columbia in 1945-46 that the *real* Lewis emerged with *My Name is Julia Ross* and *So Dark the Night*, ostensible B-pictures that were A-1 in both suspense and savvy, and *The Jolson Story*, for which he directed the production numbers. As a freelancer, he gained a large following with *Gun Crazy/Deadly is the Female* (1949), a legitimate ancestor of *The Big Combo* (1954), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and others. Lewis also did more Westerns, but this time his wagon wheels appeared in big-time stuff like *7th Cavalry* and *The Halliday Brand* (1957).

This book's filmography is terrific, with 56 pages of information not only about the 40 features Lewis directed, but also the 34 features and serials on which he served as a film editor, as well as the mass of TV segments he directed later in his career.

Science-Fiction Serials
by *Roy Kinnard*
McFarland, 223 pps.,
library binding, \$39.95

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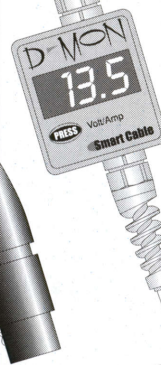
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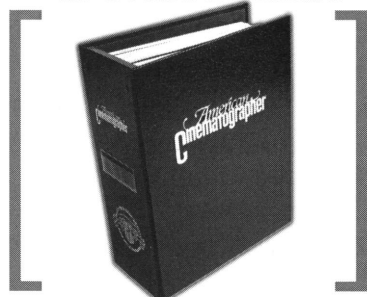
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beginning with Universal's *The Vanishing Shadow* (1934) and ending with Republic's *Panther Girl of the Congo* (1955). The more influential entries include *The Phantom Empire*, the three *Flash Gordon* serials, *The Undersea Kingdom*, *Dick Tracy*, *Mysterious Dr. Satan*, *Superman* and *King of the Rocket Men*. Casts, credits, synopses and historical commentary are given for each. These shows, which represent a segment of the industry extinct since 1956, sometimes delved into otherwise unexplored territory. Ranging from wonderful to woeful, they were generally looked down upon by the industry, even though their proceeds dependably offset many of the running costs for the Universal, Republic and Columbia studios.

Also featured in this overview is a filmography of 37 additional titles "with incidental science-fiction elements." Quite a lot of interesting material is packed between the covers for cliffhanger connoisseurs.

**Hollywood Diva:
A Biography of
Jeanette MacDonald**
by Edward Baron Turk
U. of California Press,
486 pps., cloth, \$35.

There was once a time when large-scale musical films were as eagerly awaited as MGM's bi-annual *Tarzan* epics and the occasional adventure extravaganzas such as *Gunga Din* and *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The queen of the high-class musical was Jeanette MacDonald. The statuesque, green-eyed redhead with the great voice was an all-American girl, born in West Philadelphia in 1903. She could sing anything from a pop song to grand opera in several languages, but her real forte was the operetta style exploited in most of her films — the music of Rudolph Friml, Victor Herbert, Oscar Straus, Herbert Stothart, Jerome Kern, Franz Lehár, Sigmund Romberg and Richard Rodgers.

Turk, utilizing the singer's personal papers and unfinished memoirs, as well as interviews with many of her

associates, covers her life and career in considerable detail. MacDonald emerges as a person of charm, intelligence and boundless energy. Very much a lady, she nevertheless stood up for her rights with the moguls and earned the sobriquet of "Iron Butterfly." In her early film career at Paramount, Ernst Lubitsch put her into so many boudoir comedies that she also became known as the "Queen of Lingerie." Her teaming at Paramount (1929-1932) with Maurice Chevalier in *The Love Parade*, *Love Me Tonight* and *One Hour With You* was extraordinary: the pair were opposites in almost every way, including musically, but onscreen they were superb together.

Her one picture for United Artists, *The Lottery Bride*, is among the worst of all time, and a sojourn at Fox resulted in a disappointing succession of lingerie pictures. At MGM in 1934, she and Chevalier were reteamed in the delightful *The Merry Widow*. MacDonald then co-starred in eight legendary films with operatic baritone Nelson Eddy — beginning with *Naughty Marietta* (1935) and ending with *I Married an Angel* (1942). She made other pictures, too, including the spectacular *San Francisco* (1936), in which she and Clark Gable were lovers onscreen and enemies off the set. She was also a success in concert and on the operatic stage.

Anyone searching for scandal will find little. Lubitsch and Louis B. Mayer were among the many who tried and failed to make time with the "Iron Butterfly," who remained true for years to her manager-boyfriend, Robert Ritchie. In 1937, she married Gene Raymond, and the pair remained together until her death 27 years later. MacDonald comes off in these pages as a curious and likable combination of toughness and tenderness. Incidentally, her favorite cinematographer was Oliver Marsh, ASC. ■

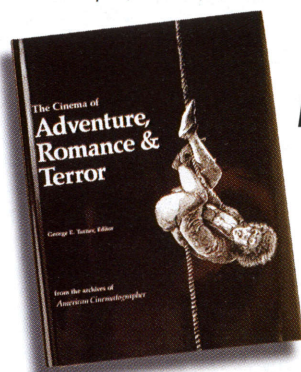
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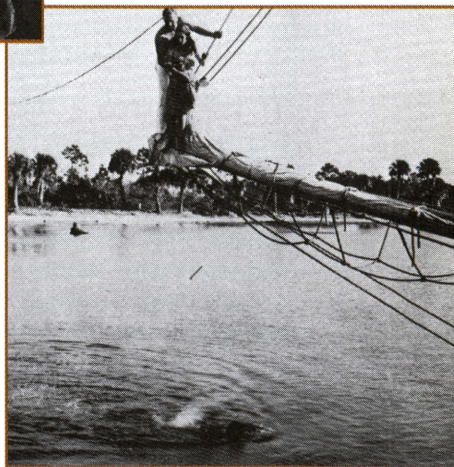
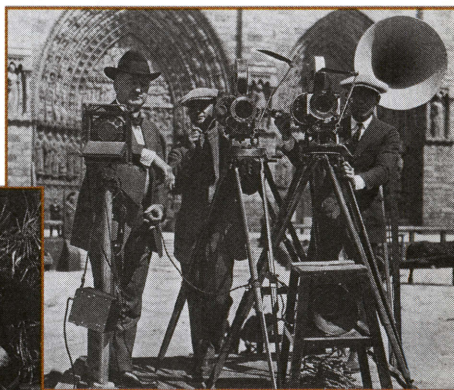
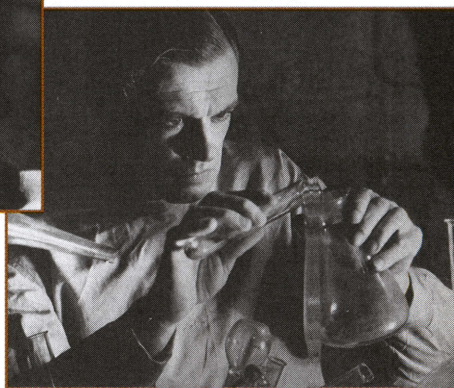
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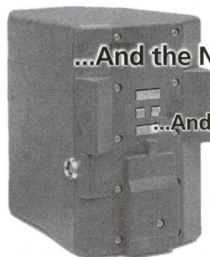
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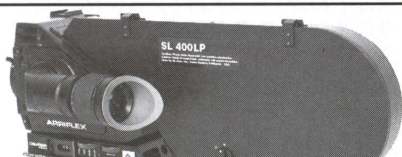
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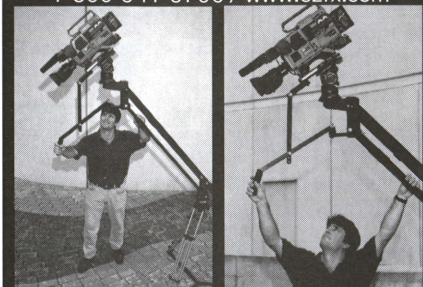


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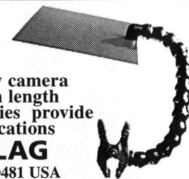
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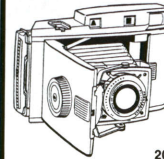
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In Memoriam

Joseph Westheimer, ASC, a veteran cinematographer and director of visual effects, died at the age of 82 on Friday, November 6, 1998, following a long illness. He had been a member of the American Society of Cinematographers for 32 years.

Westheimer was born in Los Angeles on May 18, 1916. Like most youngsters, he had a favorite playground: it happened to be the old Warner Bros. Studio on Sunset Boulevard, where his aunt was secretary to production manager Bryan Foy. At the historic studio — now home to KTLA-TV — the 10-year-old watched the filming of *The Jazz Singer*, the picture which ushered in the “talkie” era of moviemaking. One of Westheimer’s prized possessions from that time was an Al Jolson autograph obtained on the set which quotes a line from the film: “What a little boy learns, he never forgets.”

Those words were prophetic. At 15, Westheimer was working as a studio messenger, later moving to the prop department. After graduating as an electrical engineer from California Institute of Technology (class of '38) he was hired by Byron Haskin, ASC, head of the Warner Bros. Special Effects Department on Stage 5 in Burbank. Since this was the largest such department in the movie business, Westheimer was able to work with some of the top cinematographers in the effects field, such as ASC fellows Edwin DuPar, Hans Koenekamp and Warren Lynch. During the next three years, he also designed projection process screens and rear-projection equipment for Warners.

In 1942, following America’s entry into World War II, Westheimer joined the 18th Base Unit’s first motion-picture unit of the Army Air Force. Housed at the Hal Roach Studio in Culver City, this complete working studio was dubbed “Fort Roach.” There, he photographed training films until early 1946, when he was mustered out, and returned to Stage

5. In 1947, he joined the special effects unit at Eagle-Lion, a lively young company which had taken over the old Fine Arts Studio on Sunset Boulevard. In 1949, Westheimer left to take charge of



optical effects and insert photography at the venerable Consolidated Film Industries in Hollywood, where he worked for six years.

In 1955, he founded The Westheimer Company, located on Seward Street in Hollywood, and ran it for more than 30 years. This was one of the best equipped and most respected effects houses in the industry, providing a full range of visual effects for motion pictures and TV shows. The company was especially noted for elegant optical titles with lettering superimposed over live backgrounds, and matte shots in which painted or miniature elements were composited with previously photographed images. Several leading visual effects experts learned the business at the Westheimer Company, including Richard Edlund, ASC, who refers to Westheimer as “my mentor.”

In making opticals, Westheimer usually worked on the set with the director of photography and then completed

the scenes at his studio. The Westheimer Company provided unusual effects for features such as *The Glory Guys*, *Cyborg 2087*, *Dimension 5*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *Who is Harry Kellerman and Why is He Saying Those Terrible Things About Me?*. The firm also lent its magic touch to numerous television shows, including *Star Trek*, *The Outer Limits*, *Twilight Zone*, *Amos Burke — Secret Agent*, *The Big Valley*, *Honey West*, *The Smothers Brothers*, *Lassie*, *Branded*, *Dynasty* and *Shogun*.

Westheimer was a longtime Officer of the Board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. For years he was in charge of the Special Visual Effects Awards Committee, and presided at the meetings during which effects men present their work to a large body of professionals who vote on the awards. A tall and imposing man with a ready wit, he was a very popular host at the annual event. In the interest of keeping the proceedings lively, he even provided “shills” in the audience with technically sophisticated questions to ask the nominees. He was also a lifetime member of IATSE.

In 1975, Westheimer won an Academy Class III Scientific or Technical Award “for the development of a device to obtain shadowed titles on motion picture film.” Photography was his avocation, and his collection of rare and unusual movie and still cameras was always on display at his studio. Upon his retirement, some of these were donated to the ASC Clubhouse.

Katherine and Joseph Westheimer were married for 50 years and traveled to many parts of the world. They had two children, Joseph Z. (Jody) Westheimer and the late Katherine W. Stauffer, and a grandson, Joseph Lee Stauffer.

Services were private. Any donations may be made to a charity of one’s personal choice. ■

From the Clubhouse

New ASC Members

The ASC welcomes director of photography Karl Walter Lindenlaub as its newest Active Member. The German native enrolled in the Munich Film and Television School as a documentary filmmaker right after he completed a year of civil service. His experiences there proved fruitful as it helped him discover his preference for cinematography over directing. During his studies, Lindenlaub met future director Roland Emmerich, with whom he would later collaborate on such films as *Ghost Chase*, *Moon 44*, *Universal Soldier*, *Stargate* and *Independence Day*. In 1981, Lindenlaub graduated with a directing degree from the Munich Film School. The cinematographer then received a governmental grant to study camera and lighting for one year at the National Film and Television School in England. After returning to Germany, he began work on various film and television projects. It was then that he teamed up with Emmerich on *Ghost Chase*. Lindenlaub then did two films with director Ute Wieland: *Year of the Turtle* and *Tango in the Belly*. For his work on science-fiction adventure *Moon 44*, Lindenlaub received a German Film Award for Best Cinematography in 1990. His Hollywood career began with Emmerich's offer to shoot the futuristic action film *Universal Soldier*. Since that time, the cinematographer has also worked with director Michael Caton-Jones — whom he met at film school in England — on two films: *Rob Roy* and *The Jackal*. Also member of the German Society of Cinematographers (BVK), the cameraman's other credits include *Up Close and Personal*, *Red Corner* and *Isn't She Great*. In addition to being a dedicated to his craft, Lindenlaub is devoted to his wife, Lee Taylor Allen, and their 3-year-old son, Nicolas.

The ASC's newest Associate Member is John Gresch. A native of

Washington state, he now lives in Burbank, where he works for the Arriflex Corporation. Gresch has been involved in stage and studio lighting for almost 30 years. With a bachelor's degree from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Drama, he began his career in Hollywood with Berkley Colortran. While there, he was instrumental in the design of their initial line of theatrical lighting fixtures; he was also responsible for sales and promotion of Colortran lighting products. In 1980, he co-founded Excalibur Industries, a custom case manufacturer that extensively serviced the Hollywood film community. Gresch joined the Arriflex Corporation in 1986, and is currently responsible for the sales and marketing of Arri lighting products in the Western United States. He is actively involved in teaching seminars on lighting technique and equipment for many film schools and trade shows. With the help of Arri, Gresch also set up weekly "hands-on" workshops for members of the International Cinematographers Guild Local 600. In addition to his extensive involvement in the film community, Gresch is also very involved with his family, his wife and two teenage sons, with his local church, Carnegie Mellon alumni, and the Boy Scouts.

Holender Honored with Bitzer Award

The Eastern Region of International Cinematographers Guild Local 600 presented director of photography Adam Holender, ASC with its 21st Billy Bitzer Commendation Award. This honor took place after an October screening of *A Price Above Rubies*, which was photographed by Holender. His other feature credits include *Midnight Cowboy*, *The Panic in Needle Park*, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, *The Seduction of Joe Tynan*, *Simon*, *Street Smart*, *Fresh*, *Smoke*, *Blue*

in the Face, *I'm Not Rappaport*, *8 Heads in a Duffel Bag*, and *Wide Awake*.

The Bitzer prize has also been given posthumously to persons of merit, as voted on by active and retired Guild members. This year, the fourth such prize went to Jack Priestley, ASC (*No Way To Treat A Lady*, *Born to Win*, *The First Deadly Sin*). His daughter Jackie accepted the award in the place of Priestley's widow, Nancy, who was unable to attend the ceremony. Previous posthumous prizes have been given to

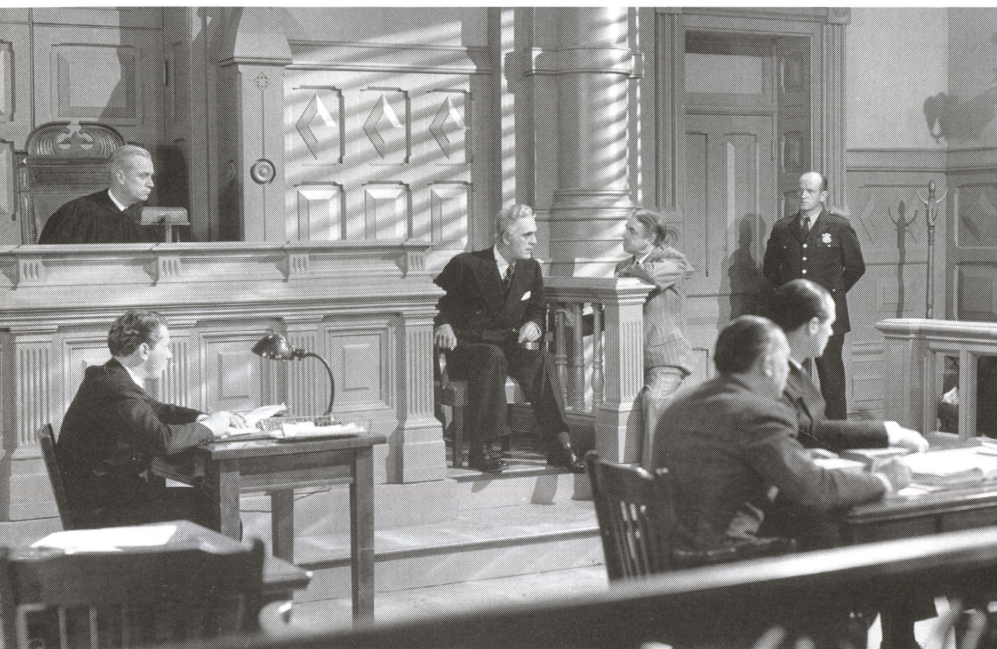


Nestor Almendros, ASC, assistant cameraman Frank Landi and still photographer Louis Goldman.

The Billy Bitzer Commendation Award was first presented in 1975 and is named for the famed cinematographer who helped found Local 644 — the first camera union in the IATSE — in 1926 and became its first elected president. Previous winners include ASC members Boris Kaufman, Don Malkames, Ernesto Caparros, J. Burgi Contner, David Quaid, Gordon Willis, Owen Roizman, Sol Negrin and Gerald Hirshfeld, along with fellow cameramen Eugen Shuftan, Arthur Ornitz, Al Mingalone, Henry Javorsky and Frank Calabria. ■

Adam Holender, ASC (left) accepts the Billy Bitzer Commendation Award from Sol Negrin, ASC, who is the co-chairman of Local 600's Education Committee.

WRAP SHOT



Dr. Henryk Savaard (Boris Karloff) is questioned by his defense attorney (Harlan Briggs), under the withering glare of Judge Bowman (Charles Trowbridge).

Although most of us regard a day in court with dread, many actors look forward to facing a judge and jury — on stage, that is. George Arliss, Gregory Peck, Paul Muni, James Stewart, Lee J. Cobb and other fine performers have given some of their finest speeches while arguing make-believe cases.

Scenarists are equally enthusiastic about writing eloquent dialogue to be delivered in soundstage courtrooms. Karl Brown, ASC, a great cinematographer-turned-writer, was no exception. Brown's favorite courthouse oratory was tailored for his friend Boris Karloff, in his screenplay for Columbia's 1939 film *The Man They Could Not Hang*. Director Nick Grinde and cinematographer Benjamin Kline, ASC, placed Karloff in slatted light from a large window. Handsome in a styled wig (his head had been shaved for *Tower of London*), Karloff brought Brown's words to life with British elan.

Portraying Dr. Henryk Savaard, whose experiment in putting a volunteer to death and bringing him back to life was ruined by police interference, Karloff gently defends himself before a stern

judge, a jury and a roomful of extras. He declares that surgery upon a living person is "like trying to repair a motor that's still running," adding that his method would make it possible to "replace vital organs that have worn out." He wants to "make death our servant instead of our master."

D.A. Drake (Roger Pryor) shreds this thesis before the jury — which features Western badman Dick Curtis as Kearney, the foreman. The verdict is guilty, and the convicted Savaard indulges "the privilege of addressing this court for two minutes": "You who have condemned me, I know your kind. Your forebears poisoned Socrates, burned Joan of Arc, hanged, tortured all those whose only offense was to bring light into darkness. For you to condemn me and my work is a crime so shameful that the judgment of history will be against you for all the years to come. You, Mr. Prosecutor, are guilty not only of murdering me, but countless thousands who might have lived had you not destroyed the only man who could have saved their lives. When your last moment comes,

remember that you killed the one man who could have made your life secure."

Savaard tells the woman who betrayed him to the police, "The world may condone what you have done, but you know deep in your heart that, but for your treachery, the boy you loved would be alive today... You killed him. And for that murder, you will live and die in the contempt and loathing of your own heart." He addresses the jurors thusly: "When those you love best lie dying, think back to this moment when you held their salvation in your hands and threw it away. Always remember that I offered you life and you gave me death." Finally, Savaard tells perennial movie judge Charles Trowbridge that "after my death you will be overtaken by a punishment far more terrible than anything you can do to me."

He could have saved his breath; Trowbridge sentences Savaard to hang. In the same room a year later with Grinde and Kline and another Karl Brown yarn, *Before I Hang*, mercy killer Karloff again got the noose from Judge Trowbridge. Three decades later, Dr. Kevorkian is getting away with it.

Why was Karl Brown, a protégé of D.W. Griffith, the celebrated photographer of *The Covered Wagon*, and a member of the ASC since 1919, writing screenplays? Because in 1926 he went to the Great Smokies to produce, write and direct his great realist drama *Stark Love*. When he returned to Hollywood, he couldn't find work as a cinematographer, so he began directing. He hated directing, so he became a successful writer.

Brown's first published writings appeared in 1920 and for several years thereafter in *American Cinematographer*, for which he served as associate editor. His five-part series "Modern Lenses" was very important. Karl was 93 and again writing for *AC* when he died in 1990.

— George E. Turner

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